

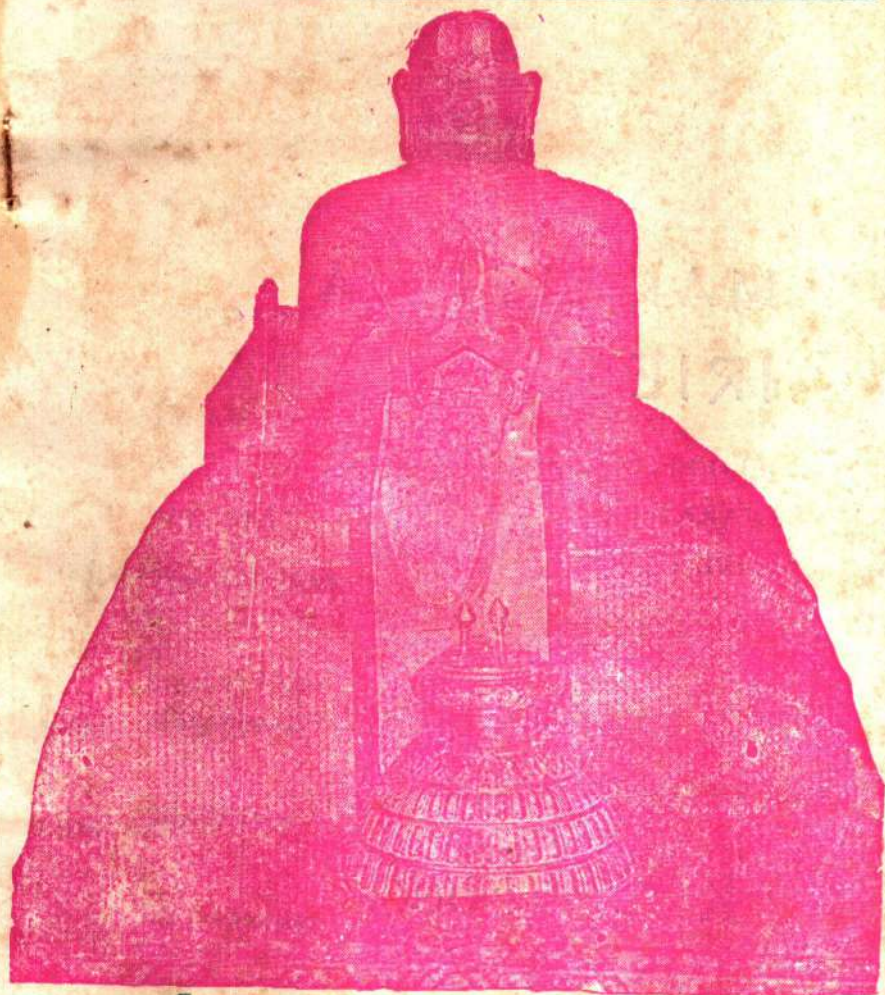
श्रीमते रामानुजाय नमः

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श्री रामानुज वाणी

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SOME THOUGHTS ON SRI RAMANUJA JAYANTI

Dr. J. Parthasarathi

A leader of destiny :

Puṇyāmbhoja vikāsāya pāpādhvāntakṣayāya ca |
Srīmān āvirabhūt bhūmau Rāmanuja divākaraḥ ||

Sri Rāmānuja's name has been reverberating through the centuries as the Leader of Destiny under whose devoted nurture the *bhakti-prapatti* religion of Sri Vaishnavism of the South attained its first and everlasting efflorescence, becoming an all-India phenomenon to which teachers of other faiths like Advaitism and Jainism got converted with their large following. It was given to Sri Rāmānuja to live a long life of 120 years (1017-1137 A.D. as now generally agreed) in which his stature grew steadily as the Invincible Propounder of the faith of devotion-surrender to Viṣṇu the Supreme Brahman Himself, the matchless Organizer shaping the worship practices, festivals and spiritual ministry of the faith and above all, as Living Exemplar of the dedicated life, winning over opponents with the magnetism of his personality and radiating humanity, compassion and concern for little noticed men and woman of the lowly order uplifting them to heights of noble devotion. Such a life of creative dynamism in Lord Nārāyaṇa's service evoked contemporary poets to many tributes of song; many narratives, arose. These swelled with the years. Of these Amudanar's *Rāmānuja Nūṇṇantāti*, as a glowing contemporary tribute couched in 108 verses of inimitable matrical harmony (of the *Kalittuṇṇai* metre) stands preeminent for its presentation of the Master as the unparalleled *bhakta* of the Alvars and Ācaryas before him and the propounder of their religion in his personal life and his commentaries on the Gīta and the Brahma-sūtras. The theme of Rāmānuja's life and achievements has provided inexhaustible material for many twentieth century writers as well like C. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's

and Swami Ramakrishnananda's English biographies, and writings in Tamil by P.B. Annangaracāry Swami, Sandilyan, Pi. Sri, etc. Almost all Indian languages now have a Rāmānuja-literature of their own. This short essay is limited to a few general reflections on the three great roles played by Rāmānuja as the Propounder and Champion of the Faith, the Consolidator and Founder of the institutions of the religion, and the Master of unique compassion and benevolence for all, reaching out to the lowly as much as the highly placed members of the society.

The Inheritor and Enricher of Yāmuna's legacy :

Rāmānuja's shaping role as expounder and champion of the theistic religion and philosophy of Lord Viṣṇu arose as a matter of destiny—his becoming the chosen successor to the heritage left by Yāmuna. We have to remember that Yāmuna was the greatly revered leader of an influential community of Sri Vaiṣṇava devotees at Srīrangam, following his grand father Nāthamuni, the first Preceptor (Ācārya) of the Upaniṣadic religion of Vaiṣṇavism as re-vivified and 'Dravidianised' by the inspired utterances Ālvārs, notably the revelation of *Tiruvāymoḻi*. The legacy of Nāthamuni, enriched in the generations of his son and three other disciples, was handed over to Yāmuna called Ājavandar who became a ruler of the hearts of men, as well as of a territory conferred on him in recognition of his extraordinary gift of intellect and devotion. The essentials of *Viṣiṣṭādvaita* as the framework of doctrinal support to the realizations of the *bhakti* religion with three *tatvas*, the supremacy of *bhakti* itself and the authority of its texts, were clearly worked out by Yāmuna in his writings : *Puruṣa nirṇaya*, *Siddhi-traya*, *Āgama-prāmāṇya* and *Gītārtha Saṅgraha* besides his prayer-hymn-jewel *Stotra-ratna*. It remained for him to integrate all the details he had worked out in his writings and his personal lectures and talks to

his community of disciples into a massive commentary on the unique statement of Upaniṣadic religion called *Brahma Sūtra* so that the intuitions and visions of a Personal God of infinite excellences may gain the prestige of scriptural authority on a pan-Indian basis. Yāmuna left this task of integrative formulation to Rāmānuja, of whose Vedantic scholarship and theistic inspiration he had been convinced and whom he chose as his successor on the pontifical seat at Srirangam. Five of his disciples — *Periya Nampi*, *Tirumalai Nampi*, *Titumālai Āṇṇan*, *Tirukkoṣṭiyūr Nampi* and *Tiruvarangattup-perumāl-araiyar* — were nominated by Yāmuna to instruct Rāmānuja in the special nuances of Sri Vaiṣṇava mantras, and in the teachings of inner enlightenment in the compositions of the Ālvāra, notably the *Tiruvāymoḷi*, and the Rāmāyana, held to be the core of the faith of Lord Nārāyaṇa, as it evolved in the Tamil land. Much of Rāmānuja's biography is taken up with the account of his acquiring the uplifting knowledge of Sri Vaiṣṇava intuitions called *rahasyas* and *rahasyārthas* from the Five Ācaryas, nominated for initiating him into these by Yāmuna. It is obvious that only after absorbing into himself the inmost inspirations of the Sri Vaiṣṇava tradition flowing through Yāmuna, Rāmānuja should have composed his *magnum opus* of the *Sribhāṣya*, fulfilling Yāmuna's dream closely following his arguments and establishing Sri Vaiṣṇava revelation as an authentic Vedantic interpretation, a full-blown alternative to the philosophical structure of *māyāvāda* of Saṅkarācārya, holding the field earlier. In effect the *Sribhāṣya* of Rāmānuja which won pan-Indian regard and acceptance for the Sri Vaiṣṇava legacy of Yāmuna, is identifiable as a fine amalgam of Upaniṣadic and *Tiruvāymoḷi* revelation. It is in other words, the essence of the *Ubhaya Vedanta* school begun by Nāthamuni, carried to a height by Yāmuna, and then placed on the peak of Vedantic exegetical literature by Rāmānuja, who stands

as the central jewel of the line of Sri Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas. In him the work of preceptors from Nāṭhamuni to Yāmuna reaches its culmination and from him later developments of *bhakti* and *prapatti* interpretations arise. The *taniyan* sloka in *Vaikuṇṭa-Stava* suggests that the Ācāryas before Rāmānuja got the fulfilment of their mission by their link with his thoughts (head) while Ācāryas after him followed in his foot-steps (feet): *arvāñco yat pada sarasija dvandvam āsṛitya, pūrve mūrdhnā yasyānvayamupagatā desikā muktimōpuh soyam Rāmānuja munih.*

Unmistakable Evidence of Rāmānuja's involvement in Ālvār bhakti-prapatti :

Though the *Sribhāṣya* is inspired by Ubhaya Vedānta, it makes no explicit reference to the Drāvida Vedānta, the Tamil Revelation of Nammālvār whose experiences of the personal God Nārāyaṇa were brought home to Rāmānuja by Tirumālai Āṇṭān, a disciple of Yāmuna according to the bidding of his Master. We have the *Guruparamparai* account of Tirumālai Āṇṭān's exposition of *Tiruvāymoḷi* to Rāmānuja, adhering to the manner of his guru Yāmuna and Rāmānuja's alternative suggestions in some contexts of the text. A misunderstanding arose between them in this matter but later it was held by the consensus of the senior disciples of Yāmuna that Rāmānuja perfectly understood the Master's motivations in the manner of Ekalavya who excelled in archery without formal instruction by his adopted guru Droṇācārya. Confirming the reliability of this account, we have actual interpretations of Rāmānuja of many verses of *Tiruvāymoḷi* recorded in the commentaries of the *Bhagavad Viṣayam* called *Uṣayavar nirvaḥam*. There is also a very revealing detail of Rāmānuja's life in the *Prapantam* commentaries (under *Tiruviruttem* 99) stating that all day long the Master would be engaged with the *Sribhāṣya* but that after his night-food of milk, on retiring to bed he would call for chanting (*santhai*) of *Tiruvāymoḷi* which

he would repeat. At the first chant his hairs would stand on end; at the second he would lose self-control; if he got involved, his tears, flowing in floods, would have to be wiped with two or four towels. The moving account of Rāmānuja's involvement in Nammālvār's *Tiruvāymoḷi* by Amalanār in his *Rāmānuja Nūṟṟantāti* (18-21, 29, 46, 60, 64) indicates decisively the source of Rāmānuja's ecstatic devotion to Nārāyaṇa gliding with pure gold his matchless scholarship and intellectual acumen.

The absence of explicit reference to Nammālvār in the Upaniṣadic commentary of the *Brahma Sūtra* is understandable, having regard to the audience the expounder had in view and the nature of the exposition in that work demanding authoritative citations from scriptures known to all-India audiences of the time. But there is an unmistakable nuance of emotional God-attachment, traceable to Rāmānuja's frequent experiential participation in the chanting of the ecstatic Tamil hymns of the Ālvārs, notably of Nammālvār in all his utterances on *bhakti*, especially the enumeration of the Lord's *kalyāṇa guṇas* in *Sribhāṣya* (besides *Gītā Bhāṣya* and the *Gadyas*). In the *Gītā Bhāṣya* these *bhakti* utterances occur more often than in the *Sribhāṣya* and one context of the former under verse 8 of chap. IV (the famous *paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām.....sambhavāmi yuge yuge* sloka) is a clear reference to Nammālvār's *uṇṇumcorum tinnum veṟṟilayum ellām kaṇṇan* (*Tiruvāymoḷi* 6-7-1):

Sādhavaḥ : uktalakṣaṇa dharmasilā vaiṣṇavāgresarā mat-samāśrayaṇe pravṛttā mannāmakarma svarūpāṇām vāṇmana-sāgocaratayā mat darśanena vinā svātmadāraṇa poṣanādikam alabhamānā etc.

The organizational achievements and the unique compassion

of Rāmānuja :

While Rāmānuja's services to the Sri Vaiṣṇava religion in giving it an Upaniṣadic structure are unique, we cannot

forget the immense practical benefits he brought to this religion by his conversion of leading religious preceptors of Advaitic persuasion to the *bhakti* faith, tackling them one by one. His own Advaita teacher Yādevaprakāsa and another Advaitic disputant Yajñamūrti became his disciples (the latter engaging in an 18 days' debate), overcome by the magnetism of his personality of dedicated devotion, defeating all argument. Rāmanuja's assembly of Vaiṣṇava devotees swelled by leaps and bounds becoming a premier temple-based movement for human betterment, even in his own life-time. Under his leadership this movement got the proper organisational set-up with reforms in temple worship-institutions and periodical festivals according to old Agamic rites. A permanent place was given to Prabandhic recitation (of the songs of the Ālvārs) in the daily function of the *cāttumūrai* and his dispensation continues to rule today as devotees chant daily : *Rāmanujārya divyajñā vardhatām, abhivardhatām*. They pray that it may spread out to the ends of the directions, for it certainly works for the good of all the people of the world. Rāmanuja instituted 74 pontifical heads to carry on the spiritual ministry of Sri Vaiṣṇavism on a permanent basis. He could not do all this without facing some opposition and the way he won over opponents to his own side as well as the tribulations he underwent, show us his sense of mission which pushed through thick and thin.

Rāmanuja's great humanity and compassion, his personal humility and esteem for the real *bhakta* regardless of caste and status, manifested in many happenings in his long career at Srirangam and in Mysore as the head of the religious community, have ever been sources of inspiration to seekers and followers of the Vaiṣṇava path. Among them we may mention here his daily walk in the street of the town gathering food (*bhikṣha*) given in charity for his maintenance, his paying obelance even to the figure of the Lord drawn playfully on the

streets by urchins teaching them that devotion transcends pettiness or mischief and his daily walk back to his monastery, after his bath in the river Kāveri, putting his hands round the shoulders of Urāṅkāvillī, a hunter chief of absolute self-sacrificing devotion, preferring him to others of higher birth and learning.

Rāmānuja has been aptly hailed by generations coming after him as an "Ocean of compassion" and we witness this compassion in all his many-faceted services done for the upliftment of the world by the way of devotion to Nārāyaṇa. The Śrī Vaiṣṇava prayer – daily recited in worship in homes and temples is in the form of the individual devotee seeking refuge in Rāmānuja, the Embodiment of the Ocean of Mercy: *yo nityam acyutapadām buja yugmarukma vyāmohatas tad-itarāṇi trṇāya mene, asmāt guror bhagavato asya dayaika-sindhor Rāmānujasya caranau caraṇam prapadye*. And when he, in his *Saraṇāgati-gadya* addressed his melting petition of taking absolute refuge in Him and was granted the redemption of grace he prayed for, he was also implicitly praying for all his men out of his compassionate heart, to be pardoned and liberated, as this śloka at the end of the *gadya* declares :

*Lakṣmīpater yati patehsca daiyaka dhāmno yo-asau purā
samarjanīṣṭa jagad-hithārthām 1*

*Prācyum prakāsayatu nah paramam rahasyam samvāda
eṣa saraṇāgati-mantra-sārah 11*

Rāmānuja is called here *daiyaka-dhāma*, the unique Resort of Compassion (for the world).



RAMANUJA AND VAISHNAVISM*

Late Prof. M. Rangacharya

Those who want to live their lives happily and harmoniously for themselves and for others have to see that they do not foolishly violate the laws or oppose the irresistible forces of Nature. Hence the propitiation of the powers of Nature is always required in our own interest. Our ancestors of thousands of years ago achieved marked progress in religion by passing from Nature to Nature's God. In Ramanuja's *Viśiṣṭādvaita* philosophy, the oneness of the ultimate reality is not the result of any form of essential identity, but is based upon an organic union of the component entities making up the reality. Hence according to him the path of philosophic ascent is inevitably from Nature to Nature's God. And the function of mercy-seeking intercession in behalf of weak man, which is assigned in Sri Vaishnavism to Lakshmi, the merciful Mother of All, enables us to see further that, in Ramanuja's view, the path of religious realisation also is in proceeding from Nature to Nature's God.

When philosophy taught our ancient sages how to analyse the universe, and their constructive imagination led them to conceive the relation between God and Nature to be like that between a husband and his wife, it became perfectly natural for Vaishnavism to make Lakshmi the wife of Vishnu and the merciful Mother of the Universe. You know that the progress of religions take place not unoften by the infusion of new ideas into old institutions. A great Arabic scholar writing about the religion of the Semites pointed out some years ago, with many examples, the tendency that there is in human societies to conceive their divinities almost unconsciously in the light of their own social organisations. If we have a community of

* Continued from page 32 of Vol. 15, No. 2, January 1991.

people whose society is matriarchal in organisation, and among whom the mother is therefore the most prominent person in the family, their most natural concept of the deity happens to be as a goddess. They look upon the high supernatural being or beings at whose hands they seek sympathy and support as a mother. In other communities wherein the social organisation is patriarchal, where the father is the most authoritative figure in the family, the divine being is looked upon as a father. This state of affairs in human civilisation is indeed very well known to students of anthropology. And we are able to make out with various kinds of evidence that the Dravidian people of South India possessed in the early days a matriarchal organisation of society, that among them the mother was accordingly the most important figure in the family, and that consequently the worship of the village goddess as *amman* — that is, as mother — came to be very prevalent among them. If we have a people among whom goddess-worship is prevalent, and if we want to introduce in their midst a newer and a higher religion, it turns out to be necessary to find a real place for a great goddess in that newer and higher religion. This was probably one of the reasons which led to the enthronement of Lakshmi in the religion of Rāmānujāchārya as the world's merciful Mother, who is the ever loving and ever successful mediatrix between Her Lord God and the individual souls seeking the salvation of a perfected re-union with Him. Rāmānuja's predecessors in the line of Sri Vaishṇava teachers had already given a prominent place to Lakshmi in their religion, probably because it happens to be a characteristic feature of Sri Vaishṇavism that it arose in the Tamil land and obtained its fresh nourishment largely from the inspired thoughts and sentiments of certain well known Tamil poets and saints. The thought-influences proceeding from these

poets and saints were taken up by Brahminical teachers, and were woven into the philosophy of Vaishnava Vedanta in a very remarkable manner. Such a mutual in-weaving of pious poetry and sublime philosophy is probably not seen in the literature of any other religion. The Sri Vaishnavas often speak of their sacred literature as *Ubhaya Vedanta*, that is, as a double Vedanta consisting of the Sanskrit philosophic Vedanta and the Tamil poetic Vedanta. And the association of Lakshmi or Sri with Vishnu as the intermediary between weak man and almighty God must also have been postulated in this manner in response to popular needs and influences; and it led to various consequences. That it is in all probability that Vaishnavism became here a religion in which Mother Lakshmi has to intercede for mercy between God and His children. And who are His children? All mankind—nay, all living beings. If all mankind happen to be His children, and if Mother Lakshmi intercedes between weak and suffering mankind on the one hand and almighty God on the other, we can easily understand how in this religion none can be kept out of the Holy of Holies, and none can be looked upon as unworthy to receive the grace of God. If out of a family of a number of children, a mother keeps away any one child from sharing the kindly and merciful favour of the father, she certainly deserves to be characterised as an unnatural mother. Therefore in this religion there is an all-comprehensive divine graciousness which knows no exclusion. The reciprocity and the universality of divine and human love, as known to this religion, has in no small measure been the result of the Mother of All being made in it to intercede between God and all His children so as to temper His serene justice with tender mercy.

I have thus tried to indicate to you in a very brief outline the position occupied by Ramanujacharya in the

development of Sri Vaiṣṇavism in our country. Vaiṣṇavism, when adopted by Rāmanuja, had already become Sri Vaiṣṇavism. In it the old Bhāgavata doctrine of salvation through *bhakti* had been re-asserted and developed beyond into the doctrine of *prapatti*. The decision to utilise the *Ubhaya Vedānta* of Sanskrit philosophy and Tamil Vaiṣṇava poetry as the basis of Sri Vaiṣṇavism had also been arrived at and practically carried out to a large extent by the predecessors of Rāmanuja. Accordingly he was in no sense the pioneer of the popular religious movement out of which Sri Vaiṣṇavism arose in South India. He may be said to have come on the crest of the wave of this movement; and it received its final seal of authority and rational sanction in his hands. That he secured for it the full support of the Sanskrit Vedānta, and proved it to be a worthy means for the exaltation of the social virtues and the uplifting of the masses, is abundantly demonstrated by the events that filled his long life of courageous conviction and enduring sincerity and comprehensive humanity. Let me refer in illustration of this to the single instance of his having admitted the *paraiyas*—the *holeyas* as you call them here—as worshippers into the famous Viṣṇu temple at Melkote, which is, as you all know, situated within your own Karnataka State. The humanity and the courage involved in this noble act are both highly remarkable, and worthy of the enfranchising religious movement which attained its consummation through his work. After him others carried the stream of Vaiṣṇava thought in various ways into various parts of this holy land of ours; and new forms of Vaiṣṇava faith came into existence under new conditions. But these are matters which cannot be included within the scope of the present thesis. The popularisation of the ideas of the Fatherhood of God, the Motherhood of Lakṣmī, and the Brotherhood of Man in India is indeed in a notable degree due to Rāmanuja and his work in life; and it is now a fact

of history that to him may be treated more or less largely the beneficent religious influences that have proceeded from Rāmananda, Kabir and Nanak. So far, Rāmanuja's work in connection with the immemorial and ever progressive religious life of India has shown itself to be like the work of the prescient sower who sows good seeds in good soil: and we may therefore feel well assured that, under the quickening stimulation of the heavenly light of God-love, the harvest of the love of man to man as man will in due time be quite abundant and full of further hope and further promise in this our ancient and historic country, wherein he lived so well and laboured so nobly.



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I, M. N. Krishnaswamy, declare that the particulars given above are to the best of my knowledge and belief.

*10th April 1992,
Madras,*

*(Sd.) M. N. KRISHNASWAMY,
Publisher.*

DASAVATARA STOTRA (OF VEDANTA DESIKA)*

L. Srinivasan

SLOKA 5 (Narasimhavatara)

*pratyādiṣṭa purātana praharaṇa grāmaḥ kṣaṇam pānijaiḥ
avyāt triṇi jagantyakuṇṭa mahima vaikuṇṭa kaṇṭiravaḥ
yatprādurbhavanādavandhya jatarā yādṛcckhikād vedhasām
yā kācit sahesā mahāsurgṛha sthūṇa pitamalyabhūt*

"May the lion called Valkunta, of irresistible might, protect the three worlds ! — the lion whose claws were sharp enough to reject the use of more ancient weapons (like the Discus) and who, by His, sudden and unexpected appearance, made the fruitful womb of the pillar in the palace of the great demon (Hiranyakasipu) the grandmother of the creators of the world."

This sloka is also found in Sankalpa Suryodaya (7-41) with some others on Lord Narasimha.

Narasimhavatara in the Vedas : Narasimhavatara finds mention in the Vedas (1) in Vishnu Suktas in the mantra *mṛigo na bhimaḥ* ; (2) in the Āyus Sukta as *suvarṇa stambha grihyam archyam*, "He whose place of birth was the golden pillar shaped like a plantain and who is to be worshipped"; (3) in the Taittiriya Aranyakam in the mantra *harim harantam* ; and (4) in Chandogya Upanishad (4-3-7) : "The Lord is the soul of the Devas, progenitor of creatures, endowed with handsome teeth (with which) He fears His enemies ; He is omniscient and His greatness is spoken of." Sri Ranga Ramanuja Muni in his *bhashya* holds that the reference here is specifically to Narasimha. (5) Nrisimha Tapaniya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda is entirely devoted to Narasimhavatara, and its earlier part has been commented upon by the foremost Advaitic acharya Sankara. (6) Parts of Apyuktopanishad and the Mantra Raja Pata Stotram of Rudra are in explanation of the famous Nrisimha Anushtub Mantra contained in the Nrisimha Tapaniya Upanishad mentioned above.

Persecution of Prahlada : Hiranyakasipu, who wanted to avenge the death of his brother Hiranyaksha at the hands of Lord Vishnu as the Boar, performed extreme penance of unparalleled severity and obtained from Brahma an extraordinary omnibus boon of absence of death from almost everybody and everything.

Finding that his son Prahlada was devoted to Lord Vishnu, his enemy, Hiranya persecuted him and tried in vain to get him killed in various ways. Prahlada was rolled down a mountain, but he, unconcerned about himself, was holding fast to his heart so that no harm might be caused to Hari who was inside — *hrdaye nodvahan harim* (Sri Vishnu Purana 1-29-12). The elephants guarding the quarters were ordered to kill him, but God within him appeared to them as a lion, and they fell back with broken tusks. Serpents were incited to bite him, but the Lord residing in his heart appeared to them as Garuda, and they retreated vomiting blood, the precious stones in their hoods broken. He was thrown into the fire, but he meditated upon Vishnu lying in the cool waters of the ocean, and the fire became pleasant to him as in the case of Hanuman. They tied heavy stones to his neck and tried to drown him in the sea, but he floated on it like Vishnu in the form of a child on the cosmic waters during dissolution. The various machinations of Sambarasura were rendered nugatory by Sudarsana, the Discus of the Lord, protecting Prahlada. Many other methods were tried in vain.

Avatara of Narasimha : Having failed in his numerous and varied attempts to get rid of Prahlada, Hiranya finally decided to kill him himself. He told the boy that he was going to cut off his head and mockingly asked him whether, after that, his Hari would come and sew his head back. The child replied that his Lord would certainly do nothing of that kind. Then, what was the use, the father asked, of his depending upon such a person who would not come to his

succour. The confident reply of the child was that the question would arise only if Hari kept quiet till then ; He would not earlier than that and would not allow him (Hiranya) to succeed in his design.

Finally, Hiranya asked the boy were his Hari was, and Prahlada replied that he was everywhere. "If so", asked the Asura, "why is He not seen in this pillar?" pointing to a particular pillar in his great court ; but Prahlada replied "He is there, I can see Him." Though not seen by others, the Lord was visible to Prahlada in the pillar. It was for his sake that *avatara* was taken, and so He was seen by him first. Becoming furious at his reply, Hiranya struck the pillar with force. If he had seen the Lord, he would have struck His person. Then, this is what happened according to the famous Sloka of Srimad Bhagavata (7-8-18): "In order to substantiate the utterance of His servant and His presence in all objects, the Lord appeared in the (aforementioned) pillar of the court, assuming an exceedingly marvellous form which was neither of a beast nor of a human being."

Narasimha killed Hiranya tearing his chest, blessed Prahlada, and being praised by the boy and the gods, disappeared.

The Marvellous and the Exceedingly Marvellous : The celebrated Srimad Bhagavata was composed principally for narrating the glories of Sri Krishna and, in fact, they constitute a large part of it. While dealing with the advent of Lord Krishna as a child in that great work (10-3-9), Suka describes Him as *adbhuta* or marvellous, but when it came to Narasimhavatara (7-8-18), he was so wonder-struck as to call it *atyat bhuta* or exceedingly marvellous. In 7-9-2 also he describes Narasimha's form as *mahad adbhutam*, a great wonder.

Substantiating the servant's word : The expression *nija-bhṛtya bhāṣitam* "the utterance of His servant" in the Bhagavata Sloka (7-8-18) can be taken to refer to several entities.

Firstly, it is obvious that the immediate provocation was to testify to the assertion of His servant (*bhakta*) Prahlada that He was omnipresent.

Secondly, the many-faceted boon granted to Hiranya by His servant, Brahma, was kept inviolate while taking the *avatara* and slaying Hiranya.

Thirdly, the Lord's servant, sage Kasyapa, had told his wife that though the two sons to be born to her, Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu, would be like thorns in the flesh of the people of the world, she would be blessed with a grandson who would be the model for all pious and high-souled devotees of God and who would be long-lived. That word was being kept.

Fourthly, Sage Narada, His servant, had, prevailed upon Indra to spare Hiranya's wife during his asceticism as she was going to give birth to a worthy and famous devotee of God whom nobody could succeed in killing. Prahlada himself refers to this in his praise of Narasimha (7-9-29). The utterance of Narada was made true.

Other constructions are also made of this phrase.

Novel Features of Narasimhavatara : Nammazhwar declares in Tiruvalmozhi (2-8-9) that none can describe the greatness of Narasimha who appeared then and there from that very pillar to put an end to that Azusa. The implications of this important nature of the *avatara* are as under :

(1) If Narasimha had come out from some other pillar, it could have been said that He was hiding there. So, he came out of the pillar which Hiranya himself indicated, and which as Periyazhvar Tirumozhi (1-6-9) points out, had been installed under his personal supervision in his great hall.

(2) If anybody else had struck the pillar, it could have been alleged that he was somehow responsible for bringing Narasimha there where He was not present earlier.

(3) If He had appeared from another place and not the

chosen spot, that would have belied the assertion of Prahlaḍa that the Lord was omnipresent.

(4) Had he appeared a little later after the pillar was struck, it could have been asserted that the Man-lion was not present there at the time in question, but appeared later from somewhere else, thus calling in question the proposition that He is always present in all things. In point of fact, the quickness with which He responded has earned for Him the appellation *aditha kai piditha perumal*, the God who caught at that very moment the hand that struck the pillar.

(5) The immediacy and full-grown nature of Narasimha also ruled out the possibility of something being born and growing to its fullness gradually.

(6) The Asura had asked that he should not meet with his end from *astras* or *sastras*, weapons or missile, wet or dry objects etc. All these conditions were fulfilled by Narasimha by using His claws as the means of destruction.

(7) Hiranya had also desired that he should not be slain during daytime or night. Accordingly, he was destroyed by the Lord at twilight when it is neither day nor night.

(8) Another part of the demons's boon was that he should not be killed on the ground or in the air. This condition too was observed as he was placed on the thigh by Narasimha, neither in the air nor on the ground, while being despatched.

(9) The demon was not to part with his life either inside the house or outside it. He was, therefore, put an end to at the entrance of the house, which is neither its inside nor its outside.

Other features like this may also be inferred by devotees. *praiyādiṣṭa purātana praharaṇa grāmaḥ kṣaṇam pañijaiḥ*: Coming to the sloka of Desika, these words suggest that a dialogue took place between the Lord and His weapons. They pleaded with Him thus: "We are not mere ornaments, but

weapons meant to wipe out enemies. A fight like the forthcoming one with Hiranya is a rare treat for us. We are Your trusted and old servants who have served You in many a battle before. So, it will be unjust if we are left out of the fray in the present instance." The Lord pacified them thus in reply, "You bear with Me for a minute. You are not being replaced for all time. I will be without you for hardly a minute and you will then regain your coveted positions. You need not also be apprehensive that I am going unarmed. Look at my claws."

pāñijaiḥ : suggests that the old weapons were rejected by the new ones, the claws, and not by the Lord Himself.

purātana indicates that the weapons were after all old, rather too ancient, and so either the Lord considered that they might not rise to the occasion, or He wanted to use something new.

The hand is only meant for *abhaya pradana*, affording protection ; it is only the nails that were used as a weapon.

As the snout was the strength of the Boar, the claws were the mainstay of the Man-lion.

Slaying of the Asura : The killing of the demon, being inauspicious, is left unsaid by the poet in this sloka, as was the case in the previous poem also relating to the death of Hirayaksha at the hands of the Varaha. However, in Sankalpa Suryodaya (7-37), the Acharya declares explicitly :

"When the Lord shakes His mane, the seven worlds are shaken with the excitement and become unsteady, and by the tip of His claws, which are as sharp as Indra's *vajra*, He tears the chest of His enemy which can put to shame the hardness of the rocks of the great mountains sustaining the earth and which blunted the sharpness of Indra's thunderbolt."

Again, in the same work (7-39) the claws are described thus : "May the hands of the Lord, the Consort of Lakshmi, who for His own pleasure, took the form of Narasimha, take

away my sins — hands which were made red by the stream of blood flowing incessantly from the chest of Hiranya torn by claws shining like vajra and which competed with one another as to which of them should precede (in the act of killing the Asura)."

This sloka is also found in Kamasikashtakam of the Acharya with slight changes.

Tirumangal Azhvar in Periya Tirumozhi (4-9-8) graphically describes the way in which Hiranya was slain by saying that he was caught hold of by Narasimha, his crown was pulverised, his head was smashed, his eyes started from their sockets, his mouth widened and he bowered in agony. This probably partly compensated for all the cruelty that he inflicted on his innocent son.

His Fury, Our Fortune : Srlmad Bhagavata (7-8-34) says that Narasimha, after killing Hiranya, was still furlous though no adversary was visible, and wore a dreadful countenance. His ire, like a fire enlarging its base and growling in height, continued to increase, instead of subsiding. The end of the world seemed to be at hand. The Devas were afraid that more such forms of the Lord would emerge from other places.

Though the affection shown by Narasimha towards a single child, Prahlada, was equal to His solicitude intending herds of cattle or protecting the entire colony of Gokula from the depredations of Kesi, the demon in the form of a horse, Peyazhvar advises his mind in Moonram Tiruvandadi (42) to contemplate on the illimitable fury shown by Narasimha, as that is at the root of His affection for His devotees and provides us with a guarantee and an assurance of the protection of God against all odds. Tirumangal Azhvar, in fact, declares in Periya Tirumozhi (5-8-3) that he has taken refuge in the Lord knowing the fury. He was possessed of when hurrying to save Gojendra from the crocodile and banking upon it as a

fortune, just as a beggar would look upon a treasure. In other words, the anger of Narasimha was both a warning to all enemies against offending His *bhaktas* and a reassurance to the latter of His solicitude for them. The two are but two different aspects of the same sentiment, but the Azhvars consider one of them to be more precious by emphasizing His fury as our fortune. Koorantha underlines another aspect in Varadaraja Stavam (68) thus: "Though Hiranya had offended You in a thousand ways, You remained composed, ignoring his actions, but when he began to torment Your devotee Prahalada, there was a sudden change in Your attitude."

avyāt trini jaganti — The first *avatara* to be mentioned in Sri Vishnu Sahasranama is that of Narasimha—*nārasimha-vapuḥ*. In order to remove our fear of that form, it immediately added *śrīmān*. Parasara Bhatta declares in his *bhasya* : "Though the Lord is taking a form which is unique, with head and body mutually incompatible and not comely, He is Śrīman, i.e., His form is celestial and very charming with beauty, loveliness and other qualities. The combination of man and lion in Him is so perfect and appropriate that those who have seen it would almost feel an aversion when they see a simple lion or a mere man without such a combination. The world was indeed protected by assuming such a unique form." Hence the prayer of Desika here *avyāt trini jaganti*, that the three words may be protected. *pānijaiḥ* — by His claws.

In Sankalpa Suryodaya (7-40) the prayer is somewhat different, thus :

"May the wondrous roars of Narasimha, who killed His foe by the play of His claws sharp as a sword, bring about the disappearance of all our fears—roars which made Prahalada rejoice ; which brought delight into the lives of the gods who worshipped Him with devotion, which belittled the loudness of the thundering sounds of the terrible multitudes of

clouds at the time of the deluge and which convulsed the seven seas."

The mastery of the author is seen in invoking the most frightening thing to remove our fears.

prahlādahladanāni — Prahlada ever rejoiced in the contemplation of God. The Lord took the form of Narasimha to make him rejoice more.

Handsome Hari: Narasimha is called *Azhagiasingam* or the beautiful lion in Tamil, based on Nanmugan Tiruvandadi (22) of Tirumagizhisai Azhvar. Irandam Tiruvandadi (84) calls Him *naram kalanda singam*, a mixture of man and lion. The Vedic mantra *mrgo na bhimaḥ* states, to start with, that the Lord took the *avatara* of a *mrga*, beast (lion), but immediately thereafter dispels the doubt whether He would be fierce to look at by asserting *na bhimaḥ*, no, He is extremely fascinating. It is like *śrīmān* after *nārasimha vopuḥ* in Sri Vishnu Sahasranama.

It is to be noted that Śrīmad Bhagavata (7-8-18) does not say that the form was that of a man and a lion, but that it was *na mṛgam na mānuṣam* neither beast nor man, because the boon of Hiranya was partly that he should be killed by neither beast nor man. So, the *avatara* is depicted in the same negative terms in which the boon was solicited and granted. But Prahlada saw Him as an enjoyable combination of lion and man. The father saw only the lion that he had to fight with, but the son noticed His omnipresence. The two perceptions tally with the negative vision and positive insight of Hiranya and Prahlada respectively.

Parasara Bhatta in Sri Rangaraja Stavam (2-64) declares that the mixture of the leonine and the human is so natural and harmonious that people no longer want to look at a lion or a man separately, but only the combined figure, just as a person who has become accustomed to take milk with sugar does not relish either milk or sugar alone.

akunṭa mahimā — A question may be asked thus. The *avatara* was over in a very short while. How can it protect the three worlds? The reply is — *akunṭa mahimā*, because He has irresistible might- *akunṭa mahimā* also means unobstructed omnipresence. By that He can protect.

vaikunṭa kanṣeeravaḥ — Vaikunta not only refers to the celestial abode of Lord Vishnu, but is also one of His names in Sri Vishnu Saharanama (406). There is also a suggestion in the expression *vaikunṭa kanṣeeravaḥ* that even in Sri Vaikunta, He is in the form of a lion and not Para Vasudeva. It is said of Parasara Bhatta that he desired to see only Ranganatha in Sri Vaikunta. Nammazhvar in Tiruvaimozhi (9-3-7) also talks of the lion as inhabiting Sri Vaikunta permanently. We may take it that Desika follows in his footsteps.

yat prādurbhavanāt yādrucikāt — The incarnation was *yadruchika* or accidental, as also its unique form and the appearance from a pillar. More than the wonder of the man-lion form, the greater wonder was a pillar giving birth to it.

Ubiquity of Narasimha : The twin objects of Narasimha's appearance were to establish the truth of Prahlada's assertions, viz. (1) that Hari was present everywhere, and (2) that there was none higher than Hari. Desika declares in Varadaraja Panchasat (23) : "For the protection Your devotee, the child of an Asura, You, Lord Varada, assumed the auspicious but feigned form of Narasimha. All the worlds belonging to You, it is certain, are even now pregnant with the forms of Narasimha, with the exception of only one pillar (in the court of Hiranya from which one of Your forms came out)."

Narasimha is an *avatara* about which the Azhvars rave in raptures, but even they have not expressed the above sentiment voiced by Vedanta Desika. By this it is made

clear to us that the Lord pervades the universe not only by His *divyātmāswarūpa* (divine spiritual essence), but also by His *divya mangala vigraha* (divine auspicious form).

Narasimha had to make His appearance all of a sudden and, as there was no knowing from where He would have to come out, He filled the entire universe with forms of Himself, ready to meet any eventuality. In the event, He had to burst forth from a pillar, but there is no reason to suppose that He retracted His other forms from the rest of the world and, therefore, Desika holds that they are very much present even today. By putting an end to Hiranya who, backed by a unique boon, had conquered all the worlds, He also demonstrated that there was none higher or more powerful than Himself.

Prahlada had asserted that Hari or Vishnu was everywhere. Hari also means lion. That statement that the lion was omnipresent was also demonstrated to be true by the Man-lion. The whole of Tiruvalmozhi 7-6 and 7-8 are devoted to depicting the ubiquity of Vishnu, but they end up by declaring that the poems relate to Narasimha, indicating thereby the Man-lion's all-pervasiveness.

An interesting question is sometimes posed thus. If Narasimha is present everywhere even now, why does He not come out of at least one place, since there is no dearth of Hiranya-like persons in the world? An equally astute answer to it is that He will certainly appear provided there is a single devotee like Prahlada living.

[To be continued]



BHAGAVAD VIṢAYAM OR IDU

[A Commentary on Nammāzhvār's *Tiruvāymozhi* by Nambīllai, translated into English by M. B. Narasimha Iyengar and M. R. Sampatkumaran.]

Ṣaṭakopa, also known as Māra and Nammāzhvār hailed from Tirukkurukūr (modern Azhvar Tirunagar) in Tirunelveli district) near the Southern tip of the Indian peninsula. Among his works in Tamil is the famous devotional poem, *Tiruvāymozhi* of 1102 stanzas. The *Vedas* are called in Tamil *Vāymozhi* because they have been transmitted from time immemorial by 'word of the mouth'. *Tiruvāymozhi* is thus the quintessence of the *Vedas*. It is one of the greatest, if not the greatest expression of mystical experience in all the literatures of the world on account of its range, depth, enthralling poetry and profound philosophy.

Tiruvāymozhi has been commented upon elaborately by a number of authors. The most popular as well as elaborate commentary is the *id(t)u* by Varadarāja also known Kallivairi (the foe of Kali) and Namb(p)illai. It is so called because it is said to be the equal [*id(t)u*] of the original or of the *Veda*. It is also known by its length running to the equivalent of 36,000 stanzas of 32 syllables each. And this is said to be also the length of the *Srutaprakāśikā*, a commentary on the *Sribhāṣya* of Ramanuja.

A Taniyan of Tiruvāymozhi

I bow to that sea of Tamil *Veda* consisting of the words of Sri Ṣaṭakopa (the sea) which is the nectar for devotees of God, which gives pleasure to all, which bestows all things desired and which is equal in value and is the essence of the *Upaniṣad* belonging to the (*Sāma*) *Veda* of the thousand branches.

A Taniyan of Īdu

I take refuge with Kalivairīdasa [Namb(p)illai] who is full of compassion. He has taken from the sea of nectar known as Vedāntin [Nanj(e)lyar, the essence of the purport

of the *Veda* in full and showers it (on the world in the form of the commentary, Īd(t)u.

FIRST INTRODUCTION :

The Lord of all (i.e. Nārāyaṇa) is the consort of Śrī (or Lakṣmī).¹ He has all His desires accomplished. He possesses all auspicious qualities. On the other hand this person, (Nāmmāzhvār or Parāṅkuṣa) remained eternally in the bondage of *samsāra*, "being born again and again in a series of births" *Tiruvāymozhi* (2-6-8) in the same way as a heavy load is transferred from one to another. This is stated in the line : "Having been born again and again in a number of births"—*Ibid*. The Lord bestowed special grace on him even at first (i.e. without any efforts on his part to evoke grace) so as to make him say by his own mouth in the early stage of his devotion : "Having attained His feet and consoled my mind, I submerge myself in a never-ending, limitless flood of joy" (*Ibid*). He (the Lord in His incarnation as Kṛṣṇa) had bestowed grace on the village of Bṛndāvana as stated thus : He who has done effortless deeds, thought of Bṛndāvana with a pure mind, desiring the increase of milch-cattle" (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 5-6-28), and He bestowed His grace so as to bring about "green and fresh grass in abundance" (*Ibid* 37)² in the same manner the Lord bestows His grace on him (Parāṅkuṣa), that he may know all the categories (or fundamental constituent principles of the universe). There are other systems differing in many ways like those accepting sixteen categories (i.e. the *Naiyāyikas* ³), six categories (i.e. the *Vaiśeṣikas* ⁴) and others. How you may ask. This is answered thus.

(Of these the first school that is described here is that of the *Lokāyatika*). The *Lokāyatika*⁵ or the materialist recognises four elements, viz., earth and others (i.e. water, fire and air). And where the combine, an attribute known as consciousness is produced (in the same way as intoxication is produced by drinks). And the pain and pleasures that are

experienced by this (combination of consciousness and elements) constitute *Naraka* (hell) and *Svarga* (heaven) respectively. When this compound breaks up, the consciousness is destroyed. Subsequently, there is nothing that actually exists. These are his established convictions.

Next comes the *Arhata* (Jaina).⁶ He holds that the world in the causal state possesses the character of eternity; but in the effected state it becomes non-eternal. It is distinct in the effected state and non-distinct in the casual state. The causal state is real (i.e. without changes) and the effect state unreal (i.e. full of modifications). And the selves attain bodies according to their *karma*. Also, the self is of the size of the body. The state of *saṃsāra* is beginningless. Being dirty (through not taking baths) and the other (ascetic) practices (such as remaining nude practising no injury towards animals, removing of the hair on the head by a pair of tongs etc.) and the acquisition of knowledge relating to the self lead to the separation (of the bound souls) from *prakṛti* and the attainment of *mukti* which is a state of (never ending) upward motion.

Of the Buddhists, the *Vaibhāṣika* says that the world is an aggregate of atoms, established as real by perception. The knowledge relating to them lasts for a moment only. And there is not a thing that is distinct from these and that can be called the self. Holding these to be real is the bondage of *saṃsāra*. *Mokṣa* is the realisation that all these are momentary.

While the *Sautraāntika* accepts the same conclusions (as those of the *Vaibhāṣikas*), he holds that the existence of the world is established through inference. And that is the difference in his case.

The *Yogācāra* states that the knower and the object of knowledge are illusory, and that only knowledge exists. And the realisation that even it (i.e. knowledge) is momentary is *mokṣa*.

The *Mādhyamika* states that to believe that the means of knowledge, the objects of knowledge and the knower exist is an illusion. *Mokṣa* is the realisation that the void is from the void.⁷

The *Naiyāyikas* and the *Vaiśeṣikas* have accepted the atoms to be the material cause of the world. And the Lord that can be established through syllogistic reasoning, is the instrumental cause (only). They also hold that *samsāra* is beginningless and that the worship of the Lord leads to the destruction of the pleasure, pain and knowledge, which (destruction) is *mokṣa* (in which state the soul is said to be insentient like a stone).⁸

The *Pāṣupata* holds the atoms as the material cause of the world, the Lord that is established through the *Āgamas* as the instrumental cause and *samsāra* as beginningless. *Mokṣa* means the attainment of a form similar to *Pāṣupati's* through the performance of works described in the *Āgamas*.⁹

The *Sāṅkhya* (or *Kapila*) and the *Yogin* (or *Patañjali*) hold that *prakṛti* (or primordial matter) undergoes modifications by itself independently and thus becomes the cause of the world. The association of *prakṛti* with the *puruṣa* (or self) is beginningless and is *samsāra*. The right discrimination between the *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* is *mokṣa*.¹⁰

The *Bhāṭṭas* and the *Prābhākaras* have accepted a number of selves who are eternal and all pervading and who suffer the bondage of *samsāra* through *karma* which is beginningless. The world is eternal as a never-ending stream. *Mokṣa* consists of the realisation of the self and is achieved through the creation of *apūrva* (by the performance of Vedic rituals). They do not believe in the existence of the Lord.¹¹

The *Advaitins* (lit. those who advocate the theory of *māyā*) hold that the delusion which regards mere consciousness devoid of all attributes as characterised by *māyā* (or illusion) is *samsāra*.

Mokṣa consists in the removal of this illusion by the knowledge that is derived from the syntactical meaning of scriptural texts such as 'That (*Brahman*) thou art' (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* VI-8-7).¹²

The follower of Bhaskara hold that *Brahman* is associated with a real limiting adjunct and thus subject to illusions. And this state is *saṃsāra*. *Mokṣa* is the destruction of the limiting adjunct by the knowledge that is of the form of worship, is derived through the syntactical meaning of scriptural texts, and is associated with the performance of the duties and rituals enjoined for various castes and stages of life.¹³

Yādavaprakāśa states that *Brahman* suffers from the illusion of regarding Himself as consisting of the Lord, the *cit* (or intelligent thing) and the *acit* (or the non-intelligent thing) which are (all) real. The knowledge of differences that is produced thereby is the bondage of *saṃsāra*. A combination of knowledge and works leads to the destruction of the knowledge of distinctions. And that is *mokṣa*.¹⁴

These systems have accepted *Brahman* as the cause of the creation of the Lord and they accept the *Vedas* as authoritative. The system of the *Ekāyana* (who accepts Nārāyaṇa only without Lakṣmī to be the Highest) holds that *Brahman* is associated with certain energies (responsible for creation etc., and not with Lakṣmī as the creative energy). And that is its peculiarity.¹⁵

Thus, all these seventeen systems are outside (the authority of) the *Vedas*, or they have interpreted the *Vedas* in a wrong manner.¹⁶ And they are all futile.

In our system, the categories (or the fundamental principles) are three in number, and they are the intelligent things, the non-intelligent things and the Lord. They are one because of the unity of the modes possessor of the modes (ie. in that the intelligent and non-intelligent things are the modes of

the Lord, who is the possessor of the modes): they are many in that there is difference of essential nature (among these).

The non-intelligent thing consists of the three qualities (of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*). It is eternal and all-pervading. It is always undergoing modifications. It has to be apprehended as that which is to be rejected. One who considers this non-intelligent thing as enjoyable and wishes to strengthen the bondage of *samsāra* has also to seek refuge in the Lord. So, too, one who believes that this (*prakṛti*) has to be discarded and who would be rid of this (bondage of *samsāra*) has also to seek refuge in the Lord.

As stated in the texts: "He is the cause of the persistence of *samsāra* and also of release therefrom" (*Svet. Up.* VI-16),¹⁷ and "For this wonderful material world (*māyā*), belonging to Me and made of the three qualities for purposes of play, is difficult to get over. Those who take refuge with Me entirely, they cross beyond this *māyā* (*Gītā* VII-14).¹⁸ He (the Lord) (must be deemed to have) stated: "I have woven a net. It is not possible for any one to unravel it. It can be loosened only by clinging to My feet." This same thing is stated thus by Nammāzhvar: "It is not possible to cut off the close links with the evil body. Therefore, You Yourself must teach a way by which I can reach You" (*Tiruvāimozhi* 3-2-3). And Pillai Tirunāraiyūr Araiyar has declared: "Even what is woven by a sparrow cannot be unwoven by anyone. And what has been woven by the Omnipotent Lord in accordance with *karma* can be unravelled only by clinging to His feet".

The intelligent self is eternal and atomic. He is of the nature of knowledge and bliss. And knowledge is (also) his attribute. All the selves are of the same form.¹⁹ And he (the self) exists only to serve the purposes of the Lord. One who meditates on the distinctiveness of the self, to get the experience of the (freed) self as described in, "For the

attainment of liberation from old age and death" *Gītā* VII-29) has to worship the Lord of all and needs the remembrance (of the Lord) at the extremity (of his death).²⁰ One who rejects the experience of the self, but wishes to have the experience of the auspicious attributes of the Lord, also have to seek refuge in Him, regarding Him only as the means (of the attainment of *mokṣa*). If of these (i.e. matter, the self, and the Lord) anything is known, it cannot but lead ultimately to the Lord Himself, as stated in : All knowledge looks up only to the Lord of her, who has her birth in a lotus" (*Mudal Tiruvandādi* 67). Knowledge, to be so, cannot but be about the Lord (lit. the consort of Sri or Lakṣmī) only. All knowledge relating to objects other than the Lord are almost equivalent to ignorance. There are these texts: "That (alone) is knowledge (which is about the Lord). All other (knowledge) is ignorance" (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa* VI-5-87), and "That alone is work which does not throw one into (the) bondage (of *samsāra*). That alone is knowledge which leads to *mokṣa*. All other works produce fatigue. And all other knowledge is merely (like) skill in mechanical, practical or fine arts." (*Ibid* I-19-41). Therefore, all the knowledge learnt about objects other than the Lord are like learning to use the awl in respect of footwear.

There are none in the world who can understand (by their own, unaided efforts) the essential nature and qualities of the intelligent things, the non-intelligent thing and the Lord, who are as described above. This Āzhvār (Nam-māzhvār) stands foremost among those who have understood these. There is none who can be said to be equal to him either among the souls that are thrown into the bondage of *samsāra* or among the eternally free souls. (Having acquired knowledge through the grace of God), it is not possible for him to understand himself (i.e. to distinguish

himself from all others). Those who are thrown into the bondage of *samsāra* cannot understand the same. Even the Supreme Lord cannot understand it.²¹ He did not follow any particular means, expecting some good therefrom. Hence he cannot understand (himself). There are none in the bondage of *samsāra* who are like him. Therefore, they do not understand (him). The Lord cannot see His attributes in such abundance (as in the Āzhvār) in any entity other than Himself, and the Lord of all cannot Himself understand him (as belonging to any class or beings).

As the Āzhvār is distinct from all those who are thrown into the bondage of *samsāra*, he is distinct from the eternally free souls, as stated in "Is this place (where you are) *Vaikunṭha* where the devotees of the Lord, are, or is it the earth (of the Āzhvār and Āzhvār's followers)?" (*Tiruviruttam* 75). He cannot be included (among the denizens) either in the Supreme Heaven or in the created material universe. His state is such as thus described: "They who think of and experience the Lord always in this world) are greater than the eternally free souls" (*Tiruviruttam* 79). He is not like those persons, who experience (the Lord) by being in a place which is conducive to the experience of the Lord (such as the Supreme Heaven), but he experiences (the Lord) while remaining in the world of *samsāra* which hinders such experience. As stated in, "Maitreya, in the Kālī age, men misled by heretics do not worship Viṣṇu, the Lord of the universe, the Creator of all and the Ruler of all" (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa* VI-1-50), in the Kālī age, love for the Lord does not arise in any one.

Indeed, in the first place, it is not (easily) possible (for a soul) to acquire a human body. Even if it is acquired, the desire, arising from the conviction that the Lord is the object of attainment, to resort to some appropriate means that will lead to attaining Him, does not arise in any one.

THE ASHTAKSHARI

Dr. V. S. Sampathkumaracharya

The Vedas are a gift from the source to mankind. Therefore, they are infallible and the enlightening means to preserve the created world in a condition of perfect harmony and satisfaction. The Vedas are co-existent with creation. The first recipient of this information is the first child and from him the Vedic tradition has started to spread. The expected result was to be in possession of what is termed Viveka, that is to distinguish between the end elements to be adopted and to be shunned. Viveka not only means discrimination, but also a steady attempt not to permit association. In the Vedantic language Samsara means association followed by the evil consequences and Kaivalya is dissociation with no possibility of contamination. This section of Vedanta is laukika, which means that asceticism should be the goal and there should be no comeback to associationism.

There is another type of Viveka that has to be considered. The recipient of the material cannot ignore or forget the entity which is the source and which offered the material for discrimination. He must understand and realise his relationship with the source, without which the Viveka already referred to could not be known. This aspect of consideration is deeper than the Viveka already referred to. This refers to the relationship that cannot be rejected, but under all circumstances must be retained, for the source forgotten means the supply stops. Hence, this Viveka is qualitatively different from the laukika or the secular, which is an association of two types of entities of the same grade. This is called the inseparable link between the bestower and the recipient. This basic discrimination emphasizes attachment as essential and confining detachment only to a section. This attachment is between not two

different types, but it is the one between the cause and the effect, the seed and the fruit, the soil and the plant. Therefore, Viveka is of two types. Attachment is a menace i.e. secular and detachment is permanent malign. This is Super Secular.

This Viveka between the two Vivekas is of extreme importance in social life best man should be drowned in distress. This is Ubhaya Vedanta at the source, which has been brought to light by Sri Ramanuja following the tradition started by the Veda. The Viveka of the association type is contained in the sacred syllable which is termed pranava. This word is a blend of the prefix *pra* and the root *nu*, which means reference to what is disclosed in entirety. The word *nava* is normally understood to mean a word of praise, which means presenting an object not as it is, but in a polished way. But the word has to be understood as revelation as found actually with no omission and all commission, for to meddle with the object is to destroy its nature. The prefix *pra* attached to *nava* means clarity and comprehension. It also means the most supreme expression deserving the top rank in language. As a result, even now, Vedic stories are undertaken by using the word pranava at the start and repeating it at the end to indicate and to confirm that the Vast Vedic literature is an elaboration of the pranava and all elaboration is contained in the pranava. Therefore, pranava is the introduction and the summary of the entire Vedic literature.

The explanation of this pranava is furnished in the Veda itself consequently, the one syllable with commentary has become octosyllabic or Ashtākshari as it is commonly termed. Thus, it becomes clear that the Ashtakshari is the only means to provide the student with facility to appreciate the nature of Viveka or discrimination. This aspect was the special responsibility of an incarnation

known as Nara Narayana at the asram at Badri. Therefore, this ashtakshari is not non-Vedic but it is the essence. The Ashtakshari known, the remaining section of the Veda becomes only an explanation, an elucidation conforming to the thought contained within. It is for this reason that tradition has recognised a discipline on the part of the pupil as a pre-condition, just as the sacred thread is a pre-condition and the mark of eligibility to study the Vedas. The only difference between the two is, the Vedas are confined to a section of creation, but the Ashtakshari could be conveyed to everyone except subject to the condition attached known as Pancha Samskara.

This pranava has to be understood with the help of its elaboration contained in two words Namah followed by Narayanaya. The language enables the Vedic student to move towards the content and therefore, a person conversant with the Vedic language is called a Brahmin. This is Sabdh Brahmana, stress being laid on the cover — the language without which the content cannot be known. The same word primarily signifies the content and a person intuitively aware of the content uses the language to remember and to communicate. This group of persons is called the Divya Suris. There is another group called Rishis. The distinction between these two sets is the Viveka implied in the context of explaining the Ashtakshari. To the student of Ashtakshari, the Vedic lore presents no difficulty for the reason that the Ashtakshari is a brief, clear explanation of the pranava with nothing to omit or uncovered.

The Vedic recital begins and ends with the two words Harih om. The first word presents the entity to knowledge. The second is the description in a concise way. Thus, from the two words we get to know what it is that actually contains. The first word is developed from the root *Hṛ* — to draw towards itself. It means whatever is not actually Hari but

belongs to it and is never allowed to remain apart. The next word Om is a description of what is to be kept together and how to keep it together. This thought reduces itself to the idea of proprietor and his property, which could not be alienated. Therefore, the pranava is an explanation of Hari and this pranava in its turn is elucidated by the two words together namely Namah and Narayana. Thus, the pranava with its elucidation, a unit of eight syllables is experienced in entirety presented in a very concise form. This is known as the octo-syllable presentation of Reality in its entirety. This is no doubt contained in the Vedic section and therefore, it is a part of the Veda.

The pranava is said to consist of three elements. The first is an entity that governs; the second is the link establishing the connection with the possessor and the possession and the third is a mere property which cannot partake of the function of the property by itself, the last syllable is a consonant in shape with a content that is not of the consonantal quality, as it partakes of the nature of the first syllable in essence and stuff, thus drawing a clear distinction between the two non-material entities, one the possessor and the other the possessed. This is the basic analysis of the three-fold entities, the material-achetana, the spiritual-chetana and the Supreme-Isvara, of whom the other two are completely dependent.

On this connection, the distinction between the two dependents has to be kept in view to avoid confusion and distress. This is the type of Viveka to note that the two cannot be treated as equal and identical. This is known as Prakriti Purusha Viveka. This automatically incites the full show of the Chetana to realise that it is in every way different from the achetana. The aid of the Supreme sought to destroy the knot with prakriti. This is known as the Panchagni Vidya in the Upanishads. The result is Kalvalya—aloofness, a state

where the chetana realises himself, as gyana, combined with Ananda, a condition of peace and satisfaction which is inherent to the chetana.

Here, the real relation existing between the proprietor and the property including the achetana is omitted. In separation the chetana feels himself Supreme and is also aware that his freedom was the result of the aid of Isvara. If this point of contact with Isvara is pursued further, it would become very clear that isolation is not the final remedy, for the property can never be apart from the proprietor. In the case of Isvara, the property can never play the role of the proprietor. In other words, the chetana cannot influence Isvara even as he is expected not to be influenced by prakriti. This would be basically impossible. Hence, dependence on Isvara is the inherent mark of the chetana, with the consequence that it would remain as chetana only when the two factors necessary for the purpose are not neglected or ignored and they are association and dependence. This is another type of Viveka differing in quality from the first type of Viveka.

Under the first, severance was the aim under the proprietor - property type of Viveka, separation is destruction. This is based on the concept Sarirakatva, which must be the normal content of the pranava, which is an elucidation of the term Hari. This line of thinking adopted in tradition from the beginning is known as Sadvidya, which is following experience from the embryonic condition. The other view is the counter move, an endeavour to reach the root and to discover what was the condition of many prior to its emergence as many. This is moving against the current from the known to the unknown.

The only hero who could take upon himself this task is the chetana, fundamentally a property functioning as proprietor. The table is turned. What was originally the proprietor

becomes the property and vice versa. This is the dual aspect of interpreting experience and it is inevitable from one point, it is a flight from misery to joy and from the other it is joy continued even in the realm of misery. Therefore, the Vedas are given in two sections two types of Viveka — one is optimism throughout not to be missed and the other pessimism mostly not to be continued. Accordingly, the Vedānta, which is Ubhaya or twofold is regarded as laukika — secular and Vaidika — spiritual. The sadvidya is Vaidika and the Panchāgni Vidyā is laukika.

The distinction between the two is permanent in the context of the nature of the chetana, described to be of the stuff of gyana. At the same time he has been regarded as the Sarīra of Isvara i.e. property. It is this combination that baffles a clear understanding of the problem without the aid of a capable trustworthy guide. The two sections are not mutually exclusive, because of the form, the content and the cover. Hence, it is essential to know the content which would not appear without the cover. This is the second type of Viveka referred to, where the chetana discovers himself to be aware that he is the property of the proprietor, Isvara. But if this is all the difference he would be as good as achetana. Therefore, the positive contribution of chaitanya is an awareness that the chetana should never forget at any point of time that he is the property and the laukika can never hope to become a Vaidika unless he realises that he is the property and never could be a proprietor who is none other than Hari. The achetana — property of the chetana is a constant reminder of the fact that the secular proprietor ceases to be proprietor and remains for all the property of the only proprietor Isvara, intolerant of any change in that attitude.

Considering the connotation of the term Hari, which is the start and finish of culture, we are informed about the existence of the two types. (1) It is a magnetic power to

attract and (2) the other in the role of filings playing the role of an intelligent entity and moving towards magnet, mainly by the power of the magnet. Likewise, in the philosophic realm, the Supreme entity Hari attracts the chetana and keeps him active and move towards Hari consequently, what is termed Aprithak Siddhi – the impossibility of remaining unassociated under any influence, is affirmed. In the same breath the magnet and the filings are not identical, because the function is distinct. This is Visistadvaita, where the togetherness and non-identity are stated very clearly, besides nothing that one of the elements is Supreme and independent and the other is dependent and helpless, a relationship that subsists between Isvara and chetana. The briefest exposition of this idea is Pranava.

The Valdika trend is emphasized in what is known as Ashtākshari and the laukika trend is emphasized in the Upanishads, which have not ignored the Valdika trend of experience. There is a saying about the Mahabharata regarding its contribution to culture that whatever is found in the Mahabharata is found in all the other branches of literature and what is not found there, could not be found anywhere. In the same way it may be considered that the Ashtākshari is the Mahabharata of the Upanishads and the first term in this is Pranava.

Narayana is the third word which is connotative as applied to the content of the sound A. In convention any one can be a Narayana. That is only denotative. In this case the word is both connotative and denotative. The entity is denoted and its features are connoted. The entity is one and one only and it is self-existent and it can support and maintain all else. This is the mark of independence in two forms. By itself it exists, nothing else can exist without it.

Secondly it is completely incharge of all dependents,

from the raw condition of existence to the ripe condition of being blissful and it is the sole functionary.

This word is split into two parts *Nāra* and *ayana*. From the existential point of view *Nāra* refers to all entities other than *Isvara*. This phenomenon is of two kinds, *chetana* and *achetana*, intelligent and material. Thus its status with respect to the source, there is no difference between *chetana* and *achetana*. The distinction is only mutual. Therefore, the entire *Nāra* is the *Visheshana* — attribute of *Isvara*, the basic entity, the notion which does not need the phenomenon, whereas the latter cannot exist without the former. Hence, the *Visheshanatva* or the attributive nature, that is existence in association cannot be denied. This aspect is brought out by the second term *Ayana* — which means basis, the Support. There is fundamentally separatism between the two is ruled out, which *Isvara* is a necessary to *Nāra*, whereas the latter is a luxury to the former. Therefore, the *Nāra* is *Valbhava*, the *guna*, *Visheshana* of *Isvara*. The *chetana* belonging to the category of *Nāra* is meant to serve the purpose of *Ayana*. This is known as *Aprithak Siddhi*. The two terms *Nāra* and *ayana* must be together, but they are distinguishable from each other, because the term *ayana* is the Support on the existential side and a lift on the functional side and the limit from the point of view ambition. Therefore, philosophy, a science revealing the Reality as it is, does not endorse the notion that it is the concern of the *chetana* to be happy without the need of *Isvara* after realisation. In this connection happiness is a possibility, whence the *chetana* being separated from the *achetana*. This is called *Kalvalya* — aloofness. This is not the purpose of *Vedānta*, because the importance of *Isvara* cannot be minimised and to indicate this aspect, the dative suffix is attached to the term *ayana*. Therefore, the *ayana* introduces the *Nāra* for its purpose and the function of the *ayana* is to develop the *chetana* and *Nāra* from the raw

condition of ignorance and separation to the ripe condition of enlightenment and inseparable association. This condition is termed Bhoga, an experience complete and harmonious in every way.

In the process of creation, which is presenting the chetana as unrelated to Isvara, the function is that of Isvara. The question arises why does Isvara interfere with the homogeneity by introducing heterogeneity. The answer is leela - sport. The intention is to prove what Nāra can be kept in a harmonious condition and further, the purpose is entirely the prerogative of ayana. Therefore, the purpose of Nāra is to serve ayana. This is known as Vibhava - ayana reflected in Nāra. This is the gift of Vedānta and in consequence any other view projected would amount to an opinion and not an observation.

Hence, *A* is the main element. It is associated with *U* and *Ma*, in the pranava with the dative case implied. This pranava is further explained positively and negatively.

The chetana which is also the stuff of Isvara, cannot claim the privilege of Isvara either in respect of status or realisation of purpose. This is expressed by Namaṇa, which emphasises positively belongingness in subordination to Isvara, thus wiping out the claim Aham. If this claim is denied, the real claimant is mentioned in the third term Nārayana. The dātā suffix clearly states that the chetana and achetana are for the purpose of Isvara and the chaitanya in the chetana must be directed to realise this aspect. Therefore, the aim and effort of one and all should be to behave as His in-service, which is the way of life. This world is a place of confusion, but it can also be a place of realisation. Therefore, what matters is to be familiar with the structure and function mentioned in the Ashtakshari, so that confusion may not be permitted to operate in purpose.

Vedantic knowledge is imperfect without the ashtakshari. To one with the ashtakshari knowledge, the Vedanta is an illustration. This is meant by Ubhaya Vedanta, the move from the source and the move towards the source. Both must co-exist in life. The goal of the laukika is the source of the Valdika, the one has to realise and the other has to preserve.



ETERNAL VALUES OF RAMAYANA AND MAHABHARATA

S. K. Ramanujachari

"The Ramayana and Mahabharata, the cardinal twin glories central to the literary heritage of India, are epic congeries, epic complexes rather than unitary Epics like the Illad and the Odyssey of Homer. It is usual to describe our national epics as 'Itihasas'. But what exactly is an Itihasa? 'It is a massive poetical recordation ensouling the nation's hoary and still living tradition, that is the nectarian clue connecting the present with the past and the future.'"

What was Valmiki's intention in composing the mighty spanned Ramayana or Vyasa's in inditing the still more formidable Mahabharata? It was not simply to tell ancient tale of human interest in general, and of racial or national interest in particular. 'Certainly the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are the epics of India and appeal to us' as gripping narratives and also as memorable poetry. But there Bards of old were much more than seasoned or sublime story-tellers.

"They wrote with a sense of their function as architects and sculptors of life, creature exponents fashioners of significant forms of national thought and religion and ethics and culture. A profound stress of thought on life, a large and vital view of religion and society; a certain strain of philosophic idea runs through these poems and the whole ancient

culture of India is embodied in them with a great force of intellectual conception and living presentation". (From Sri Aurobindo, *The foundation of Indian Culture*, Volume 14, page 285).

The Mahabharata, indeed which was in the main a later work is often referred to as the 'Fifth Veda'; and like it, even the shorter and less proliferating Ramayana is called a 'Dharmasastra', a body of spiritual, religious, ethical, social and political teaching. The ancient seer poets were at once philosophers and poets, prophets and law givers. Their vision was as large as life, and even transcended life and comprehended Man, Nature and God.

The twin epics thus came to be read and treasured, not alone as works of imperishable poetic excellence perennially providing enjoyment and education to all sectors of the people through the vivid presentation of significant personality, character conflicts, heroic and romantic actors, the play of the unpredictable, the co-existence of opposites and of instances of Divine intervention and manifestation; not alone as such nobly articulate epic poetry, but equally as the distilled wisdom of Veda and Upanishad, Arthasastra and Dharmasastra. These Itihasas were, in short, meant to be a complete and universal and infallible education by themselves.'

Of the two national Bards, Vyasa's was a massive and masculine and audaciously comprehensive mind, seizing human nature in its entirety from the lowest depths to the dizzyest heights and unafraid of Truth however stark, stale, stupendous or sublime. But Valmiki's was a more melting nature, he loved to dwell among idealist forms, and he had a sensibility emotive, imaginative and almost feminine. Celestials, man, monkey, bear, vulture titan, serpent, all occupied his interpenetrative universe that included supernature as well as nature.

"The poet of the Ramayana, comments Sri Aurobindo,

'has a flexible and universal genius embracing the Titanic and the Divine', the human and gigantic at once or with an inspired ease of transition. But Vyasa's is unmixed Olympian". (From the Harmony of Virtue, Volume 3, page 149.)

The Mahabharata with its encyclopaedic range and moving multiplicity in situation character and incident, its almost infinite comprehension of the multifariousness of life here and life hereafter is "the poem of itself" written by a whole people. In its immense species is fought the internecline war between Good and Evil.

"The Mahabharata is not only a basic document that describes the path of Man's journey towards God and Salvation but also it is a charter of his duties". In this epic is embedded God's direct declaration, the sermon on the battle-field that spells out the divine traits and demoniacal qualities in him. Life is a constant struggle but God's assurance enables one to redeem one's sagging faith. 'Man can never stand by himself. He requires God's guidance. It is available for all, at all times but he should seek it.

How a man should conduct himself, what are the legitimate obligations which he ought to fulfil, how to overcome the problems which at times are bound to threaten his very existence and how to gain moral strength to overcome all the difficulties have been laid down in clear terms. The fundamental requirement is that 'everyone should follow the code of conduct and not try to violate them'. Attachment to worldly possessions or to relatives should not induce a man to interpret these rules according to his whims. 'The Mahabharata essentially mentions the fruits of service to God'. It says that human life is a fabric woven out of black and white threads and portrays almost all ideas necessary for the blossoming of a full life.

"Whatever may be man's defect if he accepts his inability to save himself and appeals to the Lord that He alone can

protect him. He will be too ready to rush to his rescue. The mighty work illustrates that we belong to God and totally depend on Him and that he is our sole mentor.

If the Mahabharata is verily like the Himalayas, peak after peak facing one another and the entire range imperious and overpowering, the Ramayana is rather like the Ganga sustaining the popular culture of the people as their unfailing spring of living waters.

The work of Valmiki has been an agent of almost incalculable power in the moulding of the cultural mind of India. It has presented to it to be loved and imitated in figures like Rama and Sita made so divinely and with such a revelation of reality as to become objects of enduring cult and worship or like Hanuman, Lakshmana, Bharata the living human image of its ethical ideals. It has fashioned much of what is best and sweetest in the national character.

The Ramayana is indubitably one of the supreme classics of the world, one of the most ancient and unquestionably secular in its origin; yet it is also unique in its abiding involvement in the cultural, social, ethical and religious consciousness of the people of India. The characters in the Ramayana, Rama, Sita, Bharata, Lakshmana, Kausalya Manthara, Guha, Hanuman, Mandodari, Sabari and Vibhishana are not of the historical, legendary have a continuing reality in the popular consciousness and this will be so always for as Brahma is reported to have told Valmiki: "And O Great Sage, as long as mountains stand and rivers flows so long will this story of Rama's heroic deeds be told and cherished on earth."

It is worthy to note, the wide ranging diffusion of the Ramayana story, its immense popularity, its unquestioned moral authority and its unique influence permeating the everyday life of hundreds of millions; again its mighty Trivikrama sweep of the worlds of yesterday, today and tomorrow and of the heart, mind and soul; all this but reinforces the indisputable centrality

of Adi Kavi Valmiki's Ramayana. Here is the sustaining, electrifying, unifying live force, the seed of all, the sap of all; here is the ever fresh reservoir of the seminal tradition. All past inspiration flowed into the reservoir and all later Ramayana story telling has flowed from it and in the result the whole land is rich with the green of valleys and the golden harvest. There is nothing like this anywhere else in literary or cultural history.



THE DIVINE WISDOM OF THE DRAVIDIAN SAINTS*

Alkondavalli Govindacharya

TOPICS 91—100

91. God's specific presence in Forms : Saint Nammazhvar in his ecstatic moments of divine union, declared in transports of rapture how God with all his ineffable radiant beauty entered into him and filled him. One day while Nanjiyar was on his way to the temple of Lord Ranganatha met Thirukkukurukripiran Pillan and asked him : "Holy Sire, is God's omnipresence confined to his essence (swarupa) being present everywhere (vyapya) or is He also specially present in his beautiful person (vigraha vyapti). Answered Pillan : The omnipresence by person is particular or specific, an act of beignin grace on his part to so become manifest, and a reward to sanctity on man's part. When both grace and sanctity co-operate, the divine person of God who abides latent in his heart becomes manifest. [In the works of Visishtadvaita philosophers three kinds of presence are distinguished (1) that by essence (swarupa) by which the universe exists. (2) That by will (sankalpa) by which the Universal constitution stands or falls, by which it is willed as eternal or transient. (3) That by person (vigraha or antaryami manifest) by which sanctified

souls are blessed and beautified. The first is being (*sat*) the root of (2) and (3); two is wisdom (*jnāna*) and three is love (*ananda*), the two attributes of one, Being.]

(Bhag. Vish., *Niraindavan* V-5-7)

92. Joy with God above all joys: In the transport of holy joy consequent on communion with God, saints realise God everywhere, and feel they are like lost and identified with Him. In one of these rapturous states of ecstatic bliss, Saint Nammazhvar exclaimed that he seemed to be all in all in God's universe which contained Heaven and hell — the one as full of happiness and the other as full of misery, as to an ordinary man appear — are equally despicable to them as compared with God Himself. They would abhor and detest Heaven if there were no God, as welcome and embrace hell if God were there.

(Bag. Vish., *Kolangol* V-6-10)

93. Joy over Saints' gracious message to men: Saint Nammazhvar exclaimed: 'Mighty Lord of Celestials! thou hast made my heart thy turntable. So intimate and close is thy union with me, that I beseech thee never more to leave me — me so lovingly cling to thee! The last day of a course of holy festivals, had just been celebrated in Srirangam; when Bhattarya, after getting the place where he lived, watered and rendered cool and agreeable (Srirangam being a hot place), sat down meditating on that sentiment (above). He requested his disciple Jiyar to sing that verse to him, he himself following him in a heart-meeting strain. As Jiyar sang, he feelingly cried — "O joy! that there have been saints like Nammazhvar born on this earth! saints who have left us such consoling verses as these — verses which melt our story hearts. One may undergo the severest course of discipline and austerity; one may have subdued his senses such of those commencing with *Yama* and etc. etc. The definition from the work "*Yoga and*

Yanjavalkya" is given here. (1) *Yama* is the practice of the virtues of continuance, non-injury, non accepting (gifts etc.) truthfulness in order to bring about the subjugation of the senses; (2) *Niyama* is the higher lesson of the virtues of purity, contentment and austerity, study of scriptures and love of God. (3) *Āsana* is posture of different kinds, so that it may help concentration of the mind. (4) *Prāṇāyāma*, the practice of regulating breath as per rules laid down, in order to keep the body in good health. (5) *Pratyahara* is the endeavour to abstract the mind from running out to pleasures of the senses and to fix it in God. (6) *Dhāraṇa* is the intensification of abhorance for sense objects and fixtures in God. (7) *Dhyāna* is the meditating on God in his essence, attributes person, the magnificent pageantry of His creations and His acts. (8) *Samādhi* is the continuance of the subjects of meditation, as well at times out of meditation as in fixed times of meditation.] but the heart inside may remain as hard as steel. Only verses such as these succeed in tempering and liquifying them. Nanjiyar took delight in often relating this incident to his disciples. (Bhag. Viśv., *Vandaruli* V-5-7)

94. Ecstasy over God's Sovereign Grace : When Āppān Tiruvazhundur Arayar chanted Nammāzhvai's verse *Vandaruli* (V-7-7) he took cymbals in his hands and while uttering the phrase *vandaruli* he was so overcome by the sentiment conveyed there in that he felt choked and could not proceed further. [The meaning of the phrase is "out of thy sole grace, Lord! thou vouchsafest to come to me", expressive of the sovereign love, compassion and sacrifice of the Almighty is approaching the insignificant and mean creature, man, and making his poor heart His tabernacle.]

95. What doth the name of God 'Nectar' imply : Nammāzhvai, when visiting the holy shrine of Thirukkudandai

(Kumbakonam), the lord therein enthroned as “*āravamude*” meaning ‘O! Nectar endless [This single phrase which also means inexhaustible fountain of Bliss, carries much meaning. After the desires of our heart shall have been fully satisfied, after they shall have been satisfied by the perfect possession of God himself, we shall acknowledge with indescribable joy, that, far from exhausting this infinite source of bliss by beholding and enjoying it, we shall ever have new perfections to discover all infinitely amiable, infinitely capable of replenishing the heart, but which God alone can comprehend and love because God alone can understand Himself.] For God alone is such Nectar. The Nectar extracted from the churning of the milky ocean, is salt water compared to this. To deserve even this saline essence, the conditions required are high birth among the Devas, the practice of rigid chastity etc. and even then, only a little of it is partakable. Not so the inexhaustible Nectar. The Nectar is every where enjoyable. It alone too is the remedy or expiator for all sins of omissions in the fulfilment, by man, of the proclaimed will of God as regards his spiritual conduct.

There lived a saint in North India by name Lokasaraṅga – Mahamuni. A traveller from the South went there. The Mahamuni asked, “Son, what tidings there?”. Traveller: “There Sir, they have a work called Thiruvaimozhi by Saint Nammazhvar, which all good men there hold in great esteem and veneration.” Mahamuni: “Then pray recite some one verse from that work if thou knowest.” Traveller: “I have but learnt one phrase, sir, viz, ‘*Āravamude*’.” Mahamuni: “What, do they have such a sweet epithet there for the Godhead, when there are so many others, ancient ones such as Narayana? So exclaiming, he immediately left for the blessed land which gave birth to and which uttered so sweet an epithet. He would not bear to stop in his own land where

existed on such sweet name. ('*Arāvamude*' V-8-1)

96. God near and yet far : A tantalizing experience : Nammazhvar in his enthusiasm to flee to and enjoy, the Lord resident at Thiruvallavāzh remonstrated with his boosom friends who would throw cold water on his attempted scheme to flee to the holy land. Jiyar said : "I experienced like this saint once". After he became the disciple of Bhattarya, he once came from Srirangam to his own native country Malsur and returning, was anxious to be at Srirangam in time for the great festival there. But by the time he reached the north bank of Kaveri near Uthamar Koll, the river was unexpectedly in full flood. He could not cross it. All the night through, however, he could sight on the opposite bank the soul entrancing sights of the Lord's processions, the the music in attendance, and other rapturous scenes, he could not cross and go. What could he do but explain in great distress 'Oh! that I cannot be there'. This was how Nammazhvar contemplated the Lord from the outskirts of the holy place of Thiruvallavāzh, which he had managed to reach, despite his objecting friends. Similar was the experience of the three mind - born sons of Brahma (viz) Ekata, Dvita and Trita who, when they went to Svetha Dvīpa, which they found shut against their entrance, had no other alternative but to remain near the outskirts and enjoy the scene and saintly events such as worshipping Vishnu and etc., that were being entranced there - but in mournful banishment themselves from taking personal part in soul bewitching events. (Bhag. Vish., *Maney* V-9-1)

97. That spot holy where God has Trod : When God incarnates on earth and chooses particular spots thereon as centres for attracting mankind so that they may thus be saved. Such spots become so hallowed as even to draw angels down to reside there, and keep company with God. When God incarnated as Rama, one of the eternals (*nithyah*) was born

with him as Lakshmana and the celestials (*devahs*) assumed the forms of monkeys (and served the Lord as His army) and terrestrials - who were God-ward bentlike (the glant class) Vibhishana, became the Lord's followers and dependents. The angels even dwelt like trees, rocks and shrubs in such holy spots, lest, if they were movable things, their free wills might perchance incline them to stray away from their Lord. It is recorded here that in the days of Embar, one Jananatha Brahmaraya a disciple, ordered trees being felled at the upper part of the Island of Srirangam where the two branches of the river Kaveri divide. On hearing this Embar said "What Allalapperumal (nick name of Raya), you go and ruin God's creation." Raya with a view to elicit some more interesting discourse from Embar replied "Sire, is there a place in the Universe where God's creation is not?". Embar said "Not so, my friend, there is a distinction between places in general and places which, in particular, God has choosen for His own dwelling place. The groves immediately surrounding such Holy spots are like the hand garden of a great king, who himself with his royal consort, waters and tends them - who therefore have touched the sacred trees with their own hands (the sacred groves, whichever cling to and never more the holy spots, are like the eternal who never separate from God). (Bhag. Vish., *Māney* V-9-1)

98. Confirmity to God's Will preferable: 'Let *thy* will be done, not *mine*' characterises all saints who have entirely surrendered their will to the dispensations of providence. It is as an illustration of this, recorded that Kurathāzhvan's impatience to leave this world, and ascend to the spiritual realms of the blessed, became so vehement that he went to Lord Ranganatha, and preferred to him his intention, after praying to Him most fervently. The Lord condescended to say "Within three days thou shalt have thy discharge". Azhvan joyed, left the premises of the Holy Sanctuary (within which

he dwelt) and went out of the ramparts in happy anticipation of death. Ramanuja (Azhvan's Guru) came to know this, and running to his disciple, asked: "Alas Azhvan! how can'st thou have thought of soaring to the blessed regions, when I am still here?". For which Azhvan said "Excuse me Sire, I forgot all about this in the depth of my weariness in this world". Soliloquising to himself thus: "Then I shall also repair to the Lord, and submit my prayer to Him as well, supplicating Him to change his mind so as to allow of Azhvan remaining on earth for some time longer." Ramanuja went as far as the outer door of Ranganatha's sanctum, but checking himself suddenly, he stopped and said to himself, "No, I ought not to meddle with God's will, once it has been formed. Let His will be done, let me not be the instrument of interfering with it." So saying he returned, changing his first resolve, formed 'thro' his love for Azhvan. Bhag. Vish., *Piranda* V-10)

99. A Reason for saints' partiality to Krishna Avathar: Bhattarya's disciples asked him once: "How is it Lord that all the Azhvans (Saints) have showed a preference to God as Lord Krishna, not as Lord Rama or any other incarnation?". Bhattarya satisfied the query thus: "When a man is subjected to bereavement from his loved ones, the grief caused thereby decreases as time elapses; when it is fresh, its pangs are acute. So to the Azhvans, Lord Krishna's avatar is nearest to them in time (ie.) more recent than all other avatars. Hence their laminations were great. Saint Nammazhvar who was born just fortyfive days after the ascension of Lord Krishna, groaned thus from love: "Sinful man that I am, I have been born six weeks late! Ah! that what had reached the lip (ie. Krishna) hath slipped away!!" (Bhag. Vish., *Piranda* V-10)

100. The story of the mission of Buddha: Saint Nammazhvar refers to the Avatar of Buddha as a mask put on by Vishnu in order to sow the seeds of doubt, dissention and heresy amongst unbelievers (as a chastisement for their folly

and subsequent redemption. The story of Buddha is recorded thus : Once upon a time, the demon hosts (asurah) invoked Rudra by their rigorous austerities. Rudra appeared and asked them why they did it and what they wanted. They said they desired to possess three cities, for proof. Rudra granted their request, but warned that the three cities should always travel in the air without touching each other ; but if they did ever chance to collide, great misfortune should overtake the demons. Forthwith, three cities came into existence one was made of brass, another of silver and the third of gold. The demons lived there and waged war against the Devas and the Brahmins on earth who offered liberation to them. When sacrifices to Devas were obstructed, the Devas began to loose their strength and found themselves able neither to vanquish the demon nor even approach the precincts of the three cities. Then all the Devas with the brahmins repaired to Rudra and complained to him that they were deprived of their sacrificial offerings, that the demons travelled with their cities, posted themselves at all places where sacrifices were performed, were molested and killed performers and asked him therefore to destroy them. Vishnu : Could you not all join together and do it. 'No' said the Devas. The demon also do perform some acts of virtue and sacrifices having faith in their efficacy to being rewarded. Hence these act stand in our way to destroy them.

"Then commanded Vishnu, go back to your places and I shall destroy them. He forthwith put on the disguise of an aged Buddha (ie. wiseman) carries a book under his arm, twisted grass round his finger and proceeded to the cities of Demons: and there preached to them morals in such a manner that they were taken in and adopted him as their moral adviser. But when they began performing some yaga ceremonies, Buddha approached 'what do you do', he asked, 'we are about to perform a yaga' said they. 'What are these

sticks for?" Buddha asked, 'for offering into the fire' said they.

Buddha : 'Better to be born a grass eating cow than a stick eating fire. What are these food offering for again', 'for the Devas' said the demons. Buddha : 'Indeed it will be good sense to offer thus, If it be good sense that a traveller's hunger be satisfied by the food eaten by another staying at home. It is thus you hope to derive benefit in return for the food offered to the Devas. Well, next, what are these goals for? To extract the omentum from them and offer to the gods' said they. 'Oh! then' Buddha said, Butchers are righteous people, they are. By such preachings the demons were cajoled. They believed in the efficacy of sacrifices was shaken and they gave them up. They even began to revel Buddha. Buddha, then betook himself to Rudra. 'Dost thou see the demons revile here', said He. Rudra thereon waxed wroth and resolved to destroy the ungrateful demons. Battle ensued. The earth became the car. The mountain Mahameru became the bow. Lord Vishnu became the arrow and Rudra with such help exterminated the wild demons. Order was then restored and the Devas were provided as provided with their sacrificial offerings by the Brahmanas. (Bhag. Vish., Ka||-vedam V-10-4)



SRI SATHAKOPA AND SARIRAKA✱

Late R. Kesava Ayyangar

That Sathakopa was a mighty master of the Upanishads, Brahma Sutra and Gita would be evident from Tiruvolmoli. References to them would be found therein at various places. He is in fact the very seer of Upanishad. Vedanta Desika says that in the beginning of Kaliyuga, after Brahmanandi and others, (Dramidacharya and Kuhadev) Sathakopa became the exponent of Sariraka Darshana (Vyasa's

Brahma Sutra). Bodhayana preceded Brahmanandi. He had written a voluminous and elaborate Vritti on Brahma Sutra. That Bodhayana, Brahmanandi, Dramidacharya and Kuhadeva in Sanskrit, and Sathakopa in Tamil should have expounded Sariraka philosophy alike is a potent fact whose significance cannot be overestimated. The exposition by Sathakopa of Sariraka philosophy has thus a unique value in that it is the exposition by a philosopher and seer in the hoary line of Sariraka philosophers who was as great and saintly as the author of the Sariraka sutra himself and who preceded by centuries the Bhasbyakaras of Vyasa sutra. Tiruvoimoli is accordingly a most authentic exposition of Vyasa sutra and in its intrinsic excellence is as authoritative as the sutra itself. The third decade of Tiruvoimoli is a supplement to the first two. The intensity of the experience by Sathakopa of Para Brahman beging with the fourth decade and continues right up to the end in ascending magnificence. The end of Tiruvoimoli marks his sayujya in eternal bliss with the Para Brahman whose truth he proclaimed, whose, glory he sang, and whose service he sought.

The investigations made and the conclusions reached by Sathakopa in the first and the second decades of Tiruvoimoli, are unique in that they establish as basic truth that metaphysics is essentially and inevitably theological. According to Vedanta Desika the first two decades, so brief and yet so lucid at once constituting and elucidating the entire science of Sariraka (Vyasa Sutra) shine as a marvel of exposition. The tenacious heresy that philosophy and theology are poles apart and antagonistic stand exploded in the first two decades. To Sathakopa the conclusion of philosophy is the certainty theology. The conclusion of Para (the Supreme Reality) reached in the first decade is the certainty of Vanpukal - Narayan - Tin Kalal declared in the second decade. Sathakopa has more than once

* Continued from page 5 of Vol. 15, No. 2, January 1992.

emphasised that certainty (tinnam) in his Tiruvoimoli. God is the ultimate – Supreme Reality. It means that God is at once the highest reality and the source and sustainer of all other realities. The truth of all realities is that all realities are true and are all true alike as realities. There are no degrees of reality. That alone is supreme reality which organically encompasses within itself all other realities as their one source and sustainer. The one Para (Supreme Reality) is the Sarva Karana, the one fons et origo, the controller, the sustainer, and the fulfiller of all other realities. It is at once the one Para Brahman (the Supreme Reality) of Philosophy, and the one Para Devata (the Supreme Deity) of Theology. Chandogya Upanishad in terms identifies Para Brahman with Para Devata. Taittiriya Upanishad repeatedly reiterates it. It is an express Upanishadic declaration that the Supreme Reality of Philosophy is the Supreme Deity of Theology. Hence the exposition by Sathakopa explicitly and emphatically of the identity of Para Brahman – the Supreme Reality with Para Devata – Narayana – the Supreme Deity. The personality of the Supreme Deity is Brahmic. That personality comprehends at once 'brihattva' and 'brimbanantva' which together characterise the Brahmic personality. That is what the word 'Brahman' means as declared by the Veda. It means that it is at once incomparably and imponderably the most exalted reality (brihattva) and the exalter of all other realities (brimbanantva). The exalted and exalting Brahmic personality is the personality of the Supreme Deity. It is with the declaration of that Brahmic personality of the Supreme Deity that Tiruvoimoli opens in the fullness of its opening force. It means that the Supreme Deity in the supremacy of its reality is the source and sustainer of all other realities.

[To be continued]

THE NATURE OF THE SELF*

P. Sekar

An Objection :

From the above discussion, it is clear that God remains as *udāsina* (indifferent) in the first instance, as an *anumanta* in the next and that the *jīva*, without the *anumati* of God will be simply incapable to proceed in his good or bad deeds.

Thus even when the *jīva* does an evil act, the assent of God becomes necessary, without which it will not be possible for the *jīva* to do anything for that matter. Hence it follows that God, by simply withholding his consent can prevent the *jīva-s* from committing sins and thus save them from all the attendant miseries. The failure on His part to do that shows only His cruelty and mercilessness (*nirdayatva*) towards the *jīva-s*.

But according to Śrī Rāmānuja, the said defects does not arise in the case of God, in view of the following facts : the *jīva-s* are provided with the power to know (*jñātṛtva*), power to act (*kartṛtva*) and right to enjoy the fruits of their action (*bhoktṛtva*). Hence the *jīva-s* are radically different from insentient entities which are devoid of any of these features.

Hence, though both the *cit* and *acit* are under the absolute control of God, He does not treat the *jīva* on par with insentient matter. Matter by itself is incapable either to act or to refrain from acting and is made to act or otherwise by the will (*saṅkalpa*) of a sentient being.

But in the case of the *jīva*, he has been given all the ability to think and act by himself and also a free-will either to act or not to. If God interferes and makes the *jīva* do or eschew doing according to His will, then there will be no distinction between the sentient soul and insentient matter, and hence He never usurps the freedom of *jīva*.

Thus though the Lord holds the *jīva* under His absolute control, yet He never imposes His will upon him. Nevertheless

* Continued from page 40 of Vol. 15, No. 2, January 1992.

He does not totally remain indifferent either. In true with the *jīva*'s ability to know, think and act, God has shown through the *śāstra*-s the right and the wrong and has indirectly forbidden the *jīva* from committing sins by pointing out in the *śāstra*-s the various punishments that will ensue as their result. In spite of this if the *jīva* deliberately commits acts of sins persistently, not caring about the resultant fruits, then the Lord simply allows him to proceed his way, which itself is a sort of punishment, writes Śrī Sudarśana Sūri :

anumatih phaladhānam ubhayamapi daṇḍaprakāra eva
(*Śrutaprakāśika on Śrībhāṣya* 2-2-3)

But still the question will remain that if the Lord remains indifferent or grants His assent when the *jīva* proceeds on detrimental paths, that will only show His mercilessness.

But according to Śrī Rāmanuja there is no room for such a charge. He writes, "Mercy is defined as one's inability to see another's suffering, without any expectation in return." But such a mercy which is misplaced in one who is deliberately bent upon transgressing all *śāstric* injunctions will not be a virtue ; it will mean only an object impotence. What is required in such places is only a firm action (against the wrong-doers) which alone will be a virtue :

dayā hi nāma svārthanirapekṣā paraduḥkāsohiṣṇatā
sā ca svasāsanātivr̥ttivyavasāyinyapi vartamānā na
guṇāyāvakalpate pratyutapumsvvam evā vahaṭi tanni-
graha eva tatra guṇaḥ (*Śrībhāṣya* 2-2-3)

Nevertheless, on that account God does not cease to be merciful, adds Śrī Rāmanuja. He forgives all the innumerable and intolerable sins that the *jīva* has continuously accumulated all through the ages, when he just withdraws the will to commit those sins, and thereafter He Himself takes every effort for the well-being of the *jīva*, leading ultimately to his final emancipation.

*svaśāsanātivr̥ttivyasāya nivr̥ttimātreṇānāḍyananta kal-
popacita durviṣahānantāparādhānaṅgikārena niratisoya
sukhasamvṛddhaye svayameva prayatate* (Śribhāṣya 2-2-3)

Thus according to Śrī Rāmānuja, God is immensely and uniformly merciful, towards all the *jiva*-s. But as the *jiva*-s are provided with a free-will and power to know and act by themselves, He does not thrust His will upon them when they tread a wrong path, inspite of His absolute control over them, which is fully in consonance with His Godly nature. He merely looks for a positive attitude from the *jiva* to eschew all evil, and a will to submit to śāstric injunctions which is predominantly a mental disposition rather than any physical act. From then on He takes it upon Himself as His bounden duty to protect the *jiva*, enhancing more and more, the natural inner urge of the *jiva* for attaining spiritual bliss culminating ultimately in a union with Himself, whereafter the *jiva* enjoys infinite bliss in the company of God, for ever.

A further objection :

The above discussion shows that the *jiva* has an absolutely free-will and that he acts only at his own discretion, not being influenced by God. But the *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* (3-64, 65) seems to express a contrary view as the following :

*eṣa hyeva sādhu karma kārayati taṁ yamebhyo lokebhya
unniniṣati eṣa eva asādhu karma kārayati taṁ
yamadhoniniṣati.*

(The God Himself makes that *jiva* do the right things whom He wants to elevate and He Himself makes that *jiva* do the wrong things whom he wants to punish.)

Thus it seems that the *jiva* does not have a free-will as is sought to be made out.

Śrī Rāmānuja replies that the said passage is not a general statement, but concerns itself with very special cases. The word 'that' (*taṁ*) used in the passage signifies this. This idea is fully elucidated in the *Gītā*. The purport of the

passage is this for one who acts in an extremely pleasing manner to God with diligence and a firm conviction (by steadfastly adhering to all śāstric pronouncements with complete submission), God with a view to grace him, Himself arouses a desire in only those auspicious means that will be conducive to the final union of the *jīva* with Himself. And for another who persistently and deliberately acts in an extremely deplorable manner (by flouting all scriptural injunctions), God in order to castigate him, Himself arouses a desire in such acts that will take him away from Himself to a very low state.

Thus this scripture is concerned with some special instances and is not universal. The *Srutaprakāśika* observes that even these are in a way, fruits for their actions, which God confers on those who have been continuously disposed in their respective (good or bad) ways for a long time.

Śrī Rāmānuja quotes in support the *Gītā* text declaring that God Himself destroys the darkness of ignorance and bestows the light of knowledge with utmost satisfaction, on those who worship Him, yearning for His company at all times.

*teṣaṁ satayuktānāṁ bhajatāṁ pritiṭpūrvakam
dadāmi buddhiyogaṁ tam ena māmupayānti te
teṣāmevānukampartam ahamojñānaṁ tamah
nāśayāmyātma bhāvastho jñānadipena bhāsvatā.*

(*Bhagavat-gītā* 10-10, 11)

He again says that He Himself throws them into demoniac and inauspicious births again and again, those who are cruel and highly debased and who harbour a deep hatred for God and abjure that the world is devoid of God:

*asatyamapratīṣṭhāṁ te jagadāhunaraniśvaram
māmātmaparadeheṣu pradviṣanto'bhyasūyakāḥ*

(*Bhagavad-gītā* 16-8)

*tānaham dviṣataḥ krūrāu saṁsāreṣu narādhamān
kṣipāmyajas vamaśubhān āsureṣveva yoniṣu.*

(*Bhagavad-gītā* 16-18, 19)

The above view that God Himself throws the *jīva* in to inauspicious births and makes him do evil acts, again lands us in the old question of mercilessness on the part of God. Śrī Sudarśana Sūri, raising the above objection observes that, it is not a rule that mercy is always a virtue and its absence is always a defect, for it is the duty of the protector to punish the wicked and protect the virtuous.

Further the chastisement meted out to the *jīva* also is only for his own ultimate good, for it purifies him and cleanses him of all his dross, and makes him eligible to pursue the path of liberation. But God allowing the *jīva* to do evil and then punishing them does not show his mercilessness, but only His Godly nature, as was observed earlier.

The Jīva as an *aṁśa* of Brahman :

The dependent agency of the soul, shows that the *jīva* is different from the Paramātmān. But the two are declared to be one in numerous *śruti* passages. Hence it requires to be determined what exactly constitutes the relation between the *jīva* and Brahman.

According to Śrī Rāmānuja, the *jīva* constitutes the *aṁśa* of the Paramātmān as declared in the aphorism.

aṁśo nānavyapadesāt anyathā cāpi

daśakitavāditvamadhi yata eke (Brahma-sūtra 2-3-42)

[(the *jīva* is an) *aṁśa* (of the Paramātmān) for the scriptures declares him to be different from as well as one with Brahman ; some branches of the scriptures speak of Brahman itself as the fishermen, the servants and cheats.]

In the *Brahmasūtra* s the *jīva* is established to be essentially different from Brahman because of the different

natures of the two on the strength of Upaniṣadic declarations to that effect. But the two are also said to be one in the Upaniṣad-s. And the *Sūtrakāra* shows the way as to how both could be possible. He states that the *jīva* is an *aṁśa* of the Paramātmān, due to which, it is at once possible to view the *jīva* as one with as well as different from Brahman.

Śrī Sudarśana Sūri, clarifies that the word *aṁśa* here is not to be construed in the sense of a 'part' (of Brahman) for Brahman in Its essential nature is partless. Thus the declaration that the *jīva* forms the *aṁśa* has to be understood in a very special sense. The *jīva* by his very nature remains so very intimately related with Brahman at all times that it is not possible to view the two as different. Yet he is not altogether one with Brahman, and the relation that subsists between the two has no worldly analogy. It is something that has to be known exclusively through the scriptures, to be later realised directly in the ripened state of meditation or at the state of liberation.

The two are virtually inseparable and yet are radically different. The *jīva* thus remains as an *aṁśa* of the Paramātmān as His *viśeṣaṇa*. The *Śrutaprakāśika* observes that the world by being an inseparable *aṁśa* of Brahman like a lamp and its light, remains one with it and by being a *viśeṣaṇa*, remains distinct from it.

Thus in the system of Śrī Rāmānuja, the *jīva* is viewed as an *aṁśa* of the Paramātmān in a very special sense so that he forms neither a part of Brahman's essential nature nor remains totally sundered from it which is what is signified by the term *aṁśa* in the aphorism. Thus writes Śrī Rāmānuja : And he substantiates his view on the basis of scriptural pronouncements such as the following :

pādo'sya viśvā bhūtāni tripādasyāmṛtam divi (Puruṣa Sūktam)
[His one foot is all being ; his three immortal feet are in (the highest) heaven.]

mamaivāṁśo jivabhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ (Bhagavat-gīta 15-7)
(My own eternal *aṁśa* which has become the individual-self
in the world of living-beings.)

ekadeśasthitasyaṇer jyotsnā vistāriṇi yathā
pararya brahmaṇaḥ śaktiḥ tathedam akhilaṁ jagat

(Viṣṇupurāṇa 1-23-6)

[The whole of this world (of bound and freed selves) is the manifestation of the power of the Supreme Brahman (i.e., an attribute incapable of separate existence from Him) in the same way in which spreading light is (the manifestation) of the fire located in a particular spot.]

According to him, the words, *pāda*, *aṁśa* and *śakti* cannot the same meaning that the *jiva* is an *aṁśa* of Brahman.

The view that the *jiva* is an *aṁśa* of Brahman serves as one of the fundamental unifying concepts in the system of Śrī Rāmānuja which enables him to maintain the oneness between *jiva* and Brahman, in spite of the clear distinction between the two.

To sum up: The *jiva* according to Śrī Rāmānuja is totally different from the body, the sense organs, the *manas*, the vital airs (*prāṇa-s*) and also the *dharmabhūtajñāna*. He is never known through any *pramāṇa* as 'this is *jiva*', but is known by himself (*svataḥ siddha*). He always knows himself as 'I'. Knowledge forms his defining character and is called his *svarūpanirūpaṇa-dharma*. The *jiva* thus is not only consciousness (*jñāna*) but also a conscious being (*jñāta*). He is also a *kartā* (agent) and a *bhoktā* (enjoyer). But his agency is dependent upon God due to which he is called a *parāyatta-kartā*. Nevertheless the dependent agency of *jiva* does not come in the way of his freedom and thus he has got a totally free-will. Due to his past *karma-s* which are without a beginning (*anādi*), he suffers bondage. Through the performance of mean that are prescribed in the scriptures, he

pleases God and through His grace, attain liberation. And liberation constitutes the *jiva's* attaining the world of God known as *Vaikuṇṭha*, where all his inherent qualities like *apahatapāpmatva*, *vijaratva*, etc. (being free from sins, old-age, etc. called the *guṇāṣṭaka-s*) become manifest and he attains infinite bliss in the company of God *Srimaṇṇārāyaṇa* enjoying His magnificent qualities.



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